

A STUDY OF THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG
FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS' CONCEPTS OF PARENTAL
RELATIONSHIPS, PEER RELATIONSHIPS, READER
'SELF', GENDER, READING ATTITUDE
AND COMPREHENSION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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ROSALIE A. WHITEWAY



A STUDY OF THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG FIFTH-GRADE
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PEER RELATIONSHIPS, READER 'SELF',
GENDER, READING ATTITUDE AND
COMPREHENSION

BY

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ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate the interrelationships among various self-concepts, gender, reading attitude, and reading comprehension in a group of grade five students. The particular self-concepts included students' reading self-concept, self-concept of peer relations and self-concept of parent relations.

The testing instruments that were used in this study were the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1) to measure the various self-concepts, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) to measure reading attitude, and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level D 5/6, Form 3, to measure reading comprehension.

This study was conducted with 58 grade five students, 25 boys and 33 girls, who were of varying reading ability and attended a three-stream school in St. John's. Regular correlational analyses using the Pearson Product-Moment Method were performed to examine intercorrelations among the three self-concept scores, the three reading attitude scores, and the one reading comprehension score. As well, T tests were performed to determine the influence of gender on the various self-concepts, reading attitude, and reading comprehension.

For this group of grade five students, statistically significant relationships were found between:

1. students' self-concept of parent relations and academic reading attitude,
2. students' reading self-concept and recreational reading attitude,
3. students' reading self-concept and academic reading attitude,
4. students' reading self-concept and full-scale reading attitude,
5. students' reading self-concept and reading comprehension,
6. students' recreational reading attitude and reading comprehension, and
7. students' full-scale reading attitude and reading comprehension.

There were no differences between:

1. grade five males and females in their self-concept of peer relations,
2. grade five males and females in their self-concept of parent relations,
3. grade five males and females in their reading self-concept,
4. grade five males and females in their recreational reading attitude,
5. grade five males and females in their academic reading attitude,
6. grade five males and females in their full-scale reading attitude, and
7. grade five males and females in their reading comprehension.

Overall, the study results confirmed that there are significant relationships among reading attitudes, self-concepts and reading comprehension.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A goal of the educational system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is that students will perform at their optimum level and realize their potential. As stated by the Department of Education (1984), one of the general objectives for education in Newfoundland and Labrador schools is "to ensure that all pupils master the fundamental skills of learning to the limit of their abilities" (p.6). Since reading permeates the whole curriculum, learning to read well is vital in order for students to achieve this goal. However, not all students experience success at reading, despite the many varied approaches in our classrooms today.

Recently, there has been much concern in the field of education about the way students perceive themselves as learners. Ways in which students view themselves are often related to their reading achievement (Vereen, 1980). These views that students hold of themselves are aspects of their self-concept. As well, even though reading is primarily a cognitive act, it is also influenced by noncognitive functions, many of which are from the affective domain, including reading attitude (McWilliams and McWilliams, 1976).

Recently, the self-concept construct has been posited to contain representations of our special abilities, achievements, preferences, the unique aspects of our appearance, and the characteristic expressions of our temperaments (Markus, Crane,

Bernstein, and Siladi, 1982). Additionally, Shavelson and Bolus (1982) have posited self-concept structures for students' self-concept of peer relations and parent relations. These theorists propose that these self-concept structures allow us to categorize, explain and evaluate our behaviour in various focal domains, such as reading achievement. The particular self-concepts in the present study include students' reading self-concept, students' self-concept of parent relations, and students' self-concept of peer relations.

Children's perceptions of themselves are greatly influenced by their relationships with significant others (Brookover and Gottlieb, 1964; Singh, 1972; Brown, 1992; and Legge, 1994). It has been noted by Felker (1974) that in the first years of life the most important significant others are the parents. How parents help their children grow and their reactions to children's exploratory experiences have tremendous influence on them (Coopersmith, 1967; Labenne and Greene, 1969; Purkey, 1970; Samuels, 1977; Battle, 1982; and Silvernail, 1985). As well, a number of studies (Coopersmith, 1959; Carlson, 1963; William and Cole, 1968; and Richmond and White, 1971) indicated that children with positive self-concepts were more likely to enjoy high peer status than were children with low self-concepts.

Deeds (1981) stated that a positive self-concept is essential in learning to read. She firmly believed that it is just as important as word attack, comprehension, and vocabulary development. According to Deeds, each day in our classrooms students are asked to perform many tasks which require risk-taking:

Children in our school system are asked daily to take chances; to write a paragraph that will be evaluated, to read for a class that may laugh, to do boardwork that may be wrong, to create an object of art that will be judged. Viewed at another level, children are asked to risk their self-concepts (p.78).

Children who experience success are unaffected by such risk-taking. However, students who have problems in reading and experience failure are constantly risking their self-concepts and will likely become more cautious about taking chances. Not only does self-concept interfere with learning to read, but failure to read can lead to an even poorer self-concept. Thus, a negative spiralling process with reading disability and self-concept continually reinforcing one another is possible (Quandt and Selznick, 1984). Not succeeding at reading can result in hopelessness, frustration, and a negative self-concept (Cook, 1988).

An inadequate view of self can become crippling to a student. Students who experience difficulty often see themselves as inadequate and incapable of achievement. Combs (1962) stated "When children see themselves as inadequate, they lose their sense of 'can-ness'; what they can do diminishes." On the other hand, the opposite is true for students who demonstrate high levels of performance (Wirth, 1977).

If students are to succeed, they must gain a sense of confidence and begin to view themselves as achievers. Learners who are confident in their ability to succeed tend to do better in school than those who lack confidence. Likewise, learners who succeed in school tend to have more confidence in their ability to succeed than those who have not met with success (Beane and Lipka, 1976; as cited by Hocko, 1993).

The school classroom, together with the home and social groups, contribute largely to the shaping of a child's self-concept (Hamachek, 1971). For many years, wise teachers have sensed the positive relationship between students' concepts of themselves and their performance in school (Purkey, 1970). There is a need for teachers to gain insight into the role of self-concepts, especially in specific domains of learning, such as reading at various developmental levels or grade levels so that performance can be enhanced.

Reading attitudes, also, are important to the reading process. Attitudes, along with interest, motivation, locus of control, feelings, and emotions are often referred to by researchers as affective concerns. These concerns are important to the reading process because they provide the desire and the will to learn (Alexander and Filler, 1976).

Researchers have confirmed the importance of positive reading attitudes for reading achievement. Brookover (1967) in his extensive research on self-concept and achievement, concluded that the child's attitudes limit the level of his achievement. Teale (1983) stated that "it is widely accepted that a positive attitude contributes to achievement and should, therefore, be considered when assessing reading" (p.3). Also, Briggs (1987) proposed that students' self-concepts have an impact upon the attitudes and efforts applied to reaching their goals in education.

Advocates of affective education strongly state that concern for student attitudes, self-concepts, feelings, and emotions are important facets of the learning

process and insist that educational systems include the development of positive self-concepts and reading attitudes in their educational planning and practice. According to Coombs (1982), if these aspects are ignored, then the educational system runs the risk of being ineffective.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Background to the Study

Studies investigating the relationships among reading attitudes, various self-concepts, and achievement have been conducted at different grade levels (e.g., Singh, 1972, Brown, 1992; Byrne, 1993, and Legge, 1994). However, I propose to investigate the interrelationships among self-concepts, gender, reading attitude, and reading comprehension at the grade five level because studies have not been conducted at this level of schooling.

By conducting studies at different levels of schooling, researchers are given a sounder basis for judging the validity of research findings than when only a single study is available. If the present study repeats the findings of past research or yields similar results, then the results of the study will be considered more significant (Borg and Gall, 1989). As well, new aspects of this study, the grade level and the specific domain of reading within the Newfoundland context, will further contribute to research in this area.

Research indicates that there are relationships among self-concepts, reading attitude, and reading achievement (Kennedy and Halinski, 1978; Claytor, 1979; Vereen, 1980; Rivicki, 1981; Corroero and Turner, 1985; and Briggs, 1987) but there are also calls for further research in this area. If strong relationships are found among these variables at the grade five level, there will be implications to include these findings in overall models, principles, and practices of teaching reading.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationships among students' self-concepts, gender, reading attitude, and reading comprehension in a group of grade five students. The particular self-concepts included students' reading self-concept, students' self-concept of parent relations, and students' self-concept of peer relations. This study should inform and give insights to teachers of the importance of these self-concept structures and the role of reading attitude in the reading achievement of elementary students.

It is important that studies investigating the interrelationships among reading attitudes, self-concepts, gender and reading comprehension be conducted. The present study is important in that it is specific to reading at the grade five level in an urban setting and studies have not been conducted at this level of schooling. In reviewing the literature, it was found that studies conducted between the specific variables of

academic/reading achievement and reading self-concept were almost non-existent. Most of the studies reviewed have used self-concept as a global construct. Some research has indicated the existence of interrelationships among attitudes to reading, reading self-concept and reading comprehension. However, further research on the interactive nature of self-concepts, attitudes toward reading, and reading comprehension is required.

The specific questions to be addressed were:

1. Are various self-concept scores and reading attitude scores related to reading comprehension in grade five students?
2. Is there a relationship between various self-concepts and reading attitude in grade five students?
3. Are there differences between grade five girls and grade five boys in reading attitude, self-concepts, and reading comprehension?

Definition of Key Terms

Self-Concept: Broadly defined, it is a person's perceptions of him or herself. These perceptions are formed through one's experience with and interpretations of one's environment and are influenced especially by reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's own behaviour (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976; as cited by Shavelson and Bolus, 1982, p.3).

Self-Concept of Peer Relations: Refers to the peer relations scale on the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1) which measures the child's self-concept regarding his or her popularity with peers, how easily the child makes friends, and whether others want him or her as a friend (Marsh, 1990b, p. 5).

Self-Concept of Parent Relations: Refers to the parent relations scale on the Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ-1) which reflects how well the child thinks he or she gets along with his or her parents, how well the child likes his or her parents, and the extent to which the child experiences parental acceptance and approval (Marsh, 1990b, p.6).

Reading Self-Concept: Refers to the reading scale on the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1) which reflects the child's self-concept regarding his or her ability, enjoyment, and interest in reading (Marsh, 1990b, p.6).

Attitude: A predisposition to react specifically toward an object, or value which is usually accompanied by feelings and emotions (Good, 1973, p.49).

Reading Attitude: A state of mind which is accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable (Smith, 1990, p.215).

Recreational Reading Attitude: Refers to the attitude which students have towards reading for enjoyment (McKenna and Kear, 1990).

Academic Reading Attitude: Refers to the attitude that students have towards reading for the purpose of learning (McKenna and Kear, 1990).

Full-Scale Reading Attitude: Refers to an attitude score which is the composite score of both recreational and academic reading attitude scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna and Kear, 1990).

Significant Others: Those people important in an individual's life whose reactions and interactions indicate to the individual whether he or she is liked or disliked, accepted or rejected, successful or unsuccessful, worthy or unworthy. Perceptions that are formed from the opinions of significant others determine the child's self-concept (Saracho, 1980).

Reading Comprehension: Students' ability to read and understand print. A comprehension test is used to measure reading comprehension. For the purpose of this study, the comprehension subtest of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was used.

Reading Achievement: A reading grade level which is measured by a standardized reading test (Vereen,1980).

Affective Concerns: Attitudes, along with interest, motivation, locus of control, feelings, and emotions that are important to the reading process because they provide the desire and the will to learn (Alexander and Filler, 1976).

Significance of the Study

If strong relationships are found to exist among students' self-concepts, reading attitude, and reading achievement, the information gained could contribute to the efforts made by schools to improve reading. An awareness will be gained of the need to improve students' self-concepts and reading attitude at the grade five level. The results of this investigation and the knowledge gained will enhance the performance of teachers in working with students in the school.

If a strong relationship occurs, the information gained could be utilized to promote the reading success of students. The self-concepts and reading attitudes of students could be checked using standard instruments. Students could then be monitored according to their need and programs may be set up to promote interactions and behaviours to enhance the self-concepts, reading attitudes, success in reading and reading comprehension.

Programs such as these could then contribute to the improvement of students' reading levels in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. On the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (reading, subtest), Fall 1993, the grade four male students in this province were at the 39th percentile and the grade four female students were at the 46th percentile. These percentile ranks indicate the need for improved reading levels (Department of Education, 1993-1994).

Limitations of the Study

1. The study will be conducted with grade five students. The results obtained may not be generalizable to other elementary grades.
2. All students reside in one geographical area, that of metropolitan St. John's. Results may not be generalizable to other school systems or districts.
3. There are questions regarding the reliability of self-report instruments in that it is not known for sure whether students will always be able to answer questions honestly (Cook, 1988).
4. It is possible that students may not understand each item as it was meant to be understood by test developers (Cook, 1988).
5. There are many factors in a child's background of experience which influence self-concept and will not be measured (Vereen, 1980).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Perspective on the Self

Today's theorizing about self-concept extends back to the work of William James (1892) who was a forerunner of the concept of future conceptions of self. He thought ego to be an individual's sense of identity. According to James, the self was comprised of spiritual, material, and social aspects; the spiritual self was comprised of mental faculties and inclinations. In addition, material possessions comprised the material self while the esteem and regard that persons perceive that others have for them made up the social self. The view of self which incorporated feelings and attitudes along with a principle of causality also came from James (Labenne and Greene, 1969).

James believed that the origins of one's overall sense of esteem lay in how one weighed one's competencies. James conceptualized one's global self-esteem as the ratio of one's competencies or successes to one's pretensions, the value that one placed on success within each competence domain. Thus, if one's actual level of success across domains was equal to, or commensurate with, one's aspirations for success, then one experienced high self-esteem. On the other hand, if one's pretensions vastly exceeded one's actual level of success, low self-esteem would then be the result. The notion that individuals compare their levels of competence to the

importance of success across different domains and the degree of congruence or discrepancy that resulted will determine their level of self-esteem is implicit in this model. James' theorizing was intended to shed light on the processes underlying the formation of adult self-esteem (Harter, 1989).

Hattie (1992), in discussing James, differentiated between self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept related to identity whereas self-esteem related more to that which a person wished that identity to be.

Another historical scholar, Cooley (1902), adopted a more sociological perspective than James (Hattie, 1992). In contrast to James, who focused solely on a person's own evaluations, Cooley postulated that the origins of the self were primarily social in nature and they resided in the attitudes of significant others. One is motivated to appraise the attitudes of others toward the self. These opinions are then imitated or incorporated and become one's own sense of self. For Cooley, these reflected appraisals represented what he termed the "looking glass self" since significant others were the social mirror into which one gazed for information that defined the self. The "looking glass self" resembled Mead's (1934) concept of the "generalized other", which represented the pooled or collective judgements of significant others toward the self (Harter, 1989).

Mead (1934) stated that there are two general stages in the full development of the self. At the first stage, the self consisted of an organization of the particular attitudes of other individuals toward the self and also toward one another as they

participated in social acts. But at the second stage, the self was constituted not by organization of individual attitudes but also by the organization of the social attitudes of the generalized other or the social group of which he/she was a part (Mead, 1934).

James and Cooley both wrestled with the issue of whether the self was best characterized as a global self-evaluation or as an aggregate of specific evaluative judgements across a variety of domains. For both of them, some global sense of self-worth did exist, over and above the discrete evaluations of one's attributes from a variety of domains (Harter, 1985).

Throughout the 1900's, ideas and theories concerning the self and the self-concept developed rapidly. Felker (1974) classified the theorists in this area into three broad groups. Members of the first group placed heavy emphasis on the psychodynamic role of personality, meaning that personality systems are dynamic energy systems operating within the individual. Their ideas had variations of the Freudian approach. According to Felker, Sigmund Freud stood out as an early influence in the area of self and self-concept.

For the second group of theorists, self-concept was approached from a humanistic point of view. These theorists assumed that persons would naturally strive for these things that contributed to personal growth and self-fulfilment. Carl Rogers and A. H. Maslow exemplified this approach to self-concept.

The third group approached self or self-concept by focusing primarily on the cognitive dimensions of self. This approach was exemplified by G. A. Kelly and J.

C. Diggory. Kelly's (1955) theory, called a psychology of personal constructs, placed heavy emphasis on the unique way an individual viewed his world. Diggory (1966) placed heavy emphasis on the way individuals evaluate themselves and has shown that areas of self-concept can be investigated in controlled scientific settings. Diggory placed a strong emphasis on competence as an aspect of self-esteem.

Each of the above approaches to self-concept and self has added to the understanding of human behaviour and the role played by self-concept in that behaviour. The Freudian approach pointed out the necessity for looking at self-concept both as a product of what others do to an individual and as a determiner of what an individual does. The views of the humanistic theorists emphasized the need for schools and other organizations to develop growth-facilitating environments. Lastly, the cognitive group of theorists through their experimental methods held promise for more detailed explanations of the mechanisms by which the self-concept was developed and maintained.

Current Self-Theory

Unlike other areas of research, the study of self-concept is not aligned with any discipline in particular. Although many thousands of self-concept studies have been conducted, only a few researchers have published a substantial number of studies or have continued research over a long period of time. Most self-concept studies emphasized other theoretical constructs, and the interest in self-concept came from its

assumed relevance to other constructs.

Reviews of self-concept research (e.g., Wylie, 1974, 1979; Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976; Wells and Marvell, 1976; and Burns, 1979) emphasized the lack of a clear theoretical basis in most studies, the poor quality of measurement instruments used in assessing self-concept, methodological shortcomings, and a lack of consistent findings. This lack of rigor may be explained by the failure to identify self-concept with any particular discipline (Marsh, 1990b).

This same view was presented by Hansford and Hattie (1982) when they claimed "The literature on self has now reached gigantic proportions and one may feel inclined to describe it as an ill-disciplined field" (p.123).

Lynch (1981) concurred:

Self-concept has generally been treated by psychologists as an affective variable that has implications for their own personal personality theory but not as a variable that has a theoretical formulation of its own. As a result, there are many singular and overly simplistic notions about self-concept but no unified theory that may be called a theoretical formulation of self-concept or of self-concept development (p.19).

Marsh, Smith, Barnes and Butler (1983) suggested that "self-concept like many other psychological constructs suffers in that everybody knows what it is and researchers do not feel compelled to provide any theoretical definition of what they are measuring" (p.772).

In an attempt to clarify the status of the self-concept construct, Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) did a review of existing empirical and theoretical research

and developed their multifaceted hierarchical model of self-concept which incorporated aspects from most theoretical positions. They found that the facets proposed in the Shavelson model were not supported by empirical research. They were unable to identify any existing instruments which measured the facets posited in their model, and they found that the multidimensionality of self-concept was not widely accepted by other researchers. Shavelson et al. (1976) speculated that the lack of empirical support was due to the poor quality of instruments that were used in self-concept research. This need for a suitable instrument provided the impetus for the development and refinement of the Self-Description Questionnaire instruments (SDQ) which included measurements for self-concept in the specific domains of physical abilities, physical appearance, peer relations, parent relations, reading, mathematics, general school, general self, total academic, total non-academic, and total self.

Self-concept is considered a critical variable in educational research. However, the imprecision and diversity of self-concept definitions have created problems in self-concept research (Byrne, 1982). In order to shed some light on this matter, more recent definitions of self-concept will be considered.

In general terms, self-concept is one's perceptions of oneself, while in specific terms it is one's attitudes, appearance, skills, and social acceptability (Jersild, 1965; Labenne and Greene, 1969; West and Fish, 1973; and Byrne, 1984). Even though there appears to be a wide acceptance of the above definition by theorists, there is no clear, concise, and universally accepted operational definition of self-concept (Labenne

and Greene, 1969; West and Fish, 1973; Wylie, 1974; Wells and Marvell, 1976; and Hansford and Hattie, 1982).

Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) developed a theoretical definition of self-concept. Broadly defined, it is a person's perceptions of him or herself formed through one's experience with and interpretations of one's environment. These perceptions are influenced especially by reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's own behaviour.

Markus and Wurf (1987) defined self-concept as a collection of self-representations and the working self-concept as that subset of representations which is accessible at a given moment. These representations vary in their structure and function and have been given a variety of labels. They are activated depending on the social circumstances at the time and the individual's motivational state. Some of these self-representations are more important and are more elaborate with behavioral evidence than others. Some are positive, some negative, some refer to past or future experiences, while some refer to an individual's here and now experience. Also, some are representations of what the self actually is, while others are what the self would like to be, ought to be, could be, or is afraid of being. In the literature these representations are referred to as possible selves.

According to Markus and Wurf (1987), recent research on the self does not just reflect on-going behaviour but instead focuses on how the self-concept may guide and control behaviour. In this sense, self-concept has been viewed as dynamic,

forceful, active and capable of change. The self-concept interprets and organizes self-relevant actions and experiences, has motivational consequences, provides incentives, standards, plans, rules, and scripts for behaviour, and adjusts in response to challenges from the social environment. Virtually all of the early theoretical statements on the self-concept accord it this dynamic role. However, until very recently the empirical work lagged far behind the sophisticated conceptions of how the self-system works.

The majority of self-concept research in the past has been an attempt to relate complex global behaviour such as school achievement to a single aspect of the self-concept, typically self-esteem.

Progress in research on the self-concept has come as a result of three advances. The first was the realization that no longer can the self-concept be explored as if it were a unitary, monolithic entity. Secondly, was the understanding that the functioning of the self-concept depended on both the self-motives being served (e.g., self-enhancement) and on the configuration of the immediate social situation. Thirdly, an individual's behaviour is constrained by many factors other than the self-concept. As a result, the influence of the self-concept will not always be directly revealed in one's overt actions. Instead, its impact will be more subtle, in mood changes, in variations in what aspects of the self-concept are accessible and dominant, in social comparison choices, in the nature of self-presentation, and in the construction and definition of one's situation (Markus and Wurf, 1987).

Markus and Wurf (1987) stated that the most dramatic change in the last decade of research on self-concept can be found in work on its structure and content. Whether self-concept is defined in terms of hierarchies, prototypes, networks, spaces, or schemas, researchers generally agree that the self-structure is an active one. Self-concept began as a singular, static entity but has now become a multidimensional, multifaceted, dynamic structure of self-representations.

The Hierarchical Model of Self-Concept

As discussed earlier, in attempting to clarify the status of the self-concept construct, Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) reviewed existing theoretical and empirical research and developed their multifaceted, hierarchical model of self-concept (Marsh, 1990b).

According to Shavelson's (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976; and Shavelson and Bolus, 1982) definition, self-concept is a person's perception of his or herself formed through one's experience with and interpretation of one's environment. These perceptions are influenced especially by reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's own behaviour. The organization of self-concept is multifaceted and hierarchical. In this model, perceptions of behaviour at the base move to inferences about the self in subareas (e.g., self-concept in academic areas), then to inferences about the self in broader areas (academic and

non-academic areas) and then to inferences about the self in general (general self-concept). As the individual develops from infancy to adulthood, self-concept becomes increasingly multifaceted.

Shavelson and Bolus (1982) listed seven critical features of the construct self-concept:

1. It is organized and structured, in that people categorize the vast amounts of information they have about themselves and relate the categories to one another.
2. It is multifaceted, and the particular facets reflect the category system adopted by a particular individual and/or shared by a group.
3. It is hierarchial, with perceptions of behaviour at the base moving to inferences about the self in subareas (e.g., academic- English, history), then to inferences about self in academic and nonacademic areas, and then to inferences about self in general.
4. General self-concept is stable, but as one descends the hierarchy, self-concept becomes increasingly specific and as a consequence less stable.
5. Self-concept becomes increasingly multifaceted as the individual develops from infancy to adulthood.
6. It has both a descriptive and an evaluative dimension such that individuals may describe themselves (e.g., I am happy) and evaluate themselves (e.g., I do well in school).
7. It can be differentiated from other constructs such as academic achievement (p. 3).

Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) in their representation of the hierarchial organization of self-concept presented general self-concept at the apex. General self-concept was divided into two components: academic self-concept and nonacademic

self-concept. Academic self-concept was divided into subject matter areas (e.g., reading, mathematics) and then into specific areas within a subject matter. Nonacademic self-concept was divided into social, emotional and physical self-concepts and then further divided into more specific facets in a manner similar to academic self-concept.

To test Shavelson et al.'s (1976) model, Marsh and Shavelson (1985) used responses to the Self-Description Questionnaire instrument (SDQ) by grades two to five Australian students. Their findings supported the model. However, the hierarchy proved to be more complicated than originally anticipated leading to a revision of the model in 1988.

In support of the construct validity of a multifaceted self-concept, researchers have found academic achievement to be more highly correlated with academic self-concept than with nonacademic and general self-concept (Byrne, 1984). In addition, achievement in particular content areas was more highly correlated with self-concepts in the matching content areas (Marsh, 1986).

There is no clear agreement about how general academic self-concept should be defined and existing research suggested that general self-concept, no matter how it is defined, cannot adequately reflect the diversity of specific academic facets. In order for academic self-concept research to carry out its role, the specific facets of academic self-concept are more useful than a general facet (Marsh, Byrne and Shavelson, 1988). Marsh et al. recommended that academic self-concept research

emphasize multiple specific facets rather than a general facet of academic self-concept.

Self-Concept and its Developmental Implications

Some theorists proposing models on the self-concept (e.g., Coopersmith, 1967) concluded that self-concept is a unidimensional construct which was best assessed by combining an individual's self-evaluations across items tapping a range of content. Items were given equal weight, and it was assumed that the total score adequately reflected an individual's sense of self across various areas of his or her life.

This unidimensional approach was challenged by proponents of a multidimensional perspective. They argued that the unidimensional approach masked important evaluative distinctions that individuals make about their competence in different domains of their life. Proponents of the multidimensional perspective proposed models and adopted measurement strategies that identified the particular domains of self-evaluation, assessing each separately. Such an approach provided a profile of self-evaluations across those domains identified by the given investigator. An alternative model was found in the work of Rosenberg (1979) who emphasized global self-esteem as the general regard one holds for the self as a person. Rosenberg acknowledged such global judgment as the product of a complex combination of discrete judgments about the self (Harter, 1989).

Harter's model of the self-concept represented an integration of the two

approaches: the multidimensional nature of self-evaluative judgments as well as an individual's overall sense of self-worth which was consistent with Rosenberg's conceptualization. This global self-worth was assessed not by combining domain-specific judgments but by asking an independent set of questions that tapped the construct of self-worth directly. By conceptually and empirically separating domain-specific judgments of competence from the more global judgment of one's worth as a person, the relationship that specific competencies bear to global self-worth can be determined.

Harter's model of self-concept identified specific domains to be included at each developmental period across the life span as well as the age at which judgments of global self-worth can be reliably obtained.

Harter and Pike (1984) demonstrated that 4- to 7-year-olds can make reliable judgments about the following four domains: cognitive competence, physical competence, social acceptance, and behavioral conduct. These four dimensions are meaningful to young children in that their judgments about the self can be articulated. However, judgments across the domains cannot be clearly differentiated. According to Harter and Pike, children in this age range are incapable of making judgments about their self-worth (i.e., conscious, verbalizable concept of one's worth as a person). It is not until middle childhood that one can make meaningful and reliable judgments about this global construct. This finding is consistent with the evidence on children's emerging cognitive abilities to form concepts.

This does not mean that young children do not possess a sense of self-worth. In recent empirical work, Haltiwanter and Harter (1988) proposed that young children 'exude' a sense of overall self-worth as manifested in certain behaviours. However, they do not have a verbalized concept of their self-worth, as tapped by self-report measures. According to Harter (1989), during middle childhood the structure of the self-concept changes. More domains are differentiated and the ability to make judgments about self-worth emerges. Factoring procedures applied to the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985) revealed that children between the ages of 8 and 12 clearly differentiated the five domains included on this instrument: scholastic competence, athletic competence, peer social acceptance, behavioral conduct, and physical appearance. In addition to these emerging discriminations, children's responses to items asking about their global self-worth indicated that the concept takes on meaning in middle childhood.

Self-Concept and Academic Achievement

As is apparent from the preceding discussion, it is now widely recognized that self-concept is a multi-dimensional construct. However, a review of the literature indicated that very often a unidimensional self-concept construct (general self-concept) and generalized academic achievement were studied rather than a specific self-concept construct (e.g., reading self-concept) and achievement in a specific

subject area (e.g., reading). The focus of this section is to determine if research findings indicate a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement/reading achievement. The different types of studies and their results will be discussed.

Hundreds of studies have been done which show a consistent relationship between different aspects of self-concept and various school-related variables which include academic achievement (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig, 1980). The first studies we will discuss are studies which have general self-concept and academic achievement as variables.

Piers and Harris (1964) collected data from students in grades 3, 6, and 10. In this study the correlation between self-concept and academic achievement was found to be positive but low. The relationship appeared to be strongest at the grade-six level (0.32). This value of 0.32 was comparable to the correlation of 0.36 reported by Coopersmith (1967) in his study of students in grades 5 and 6. Also, Caplin (1969) studied 60 black children and children from intermediate grades in two elementary schools. He found a significant positive relationship between self-concept and academic achievement.

Marx and Winne (1975) in their investigation of fifth- and sixth-grade children of low socio-economic status found self-concept to be positively but negligibly related to academic achievement. Butcher (1968) and Mintz and Muller (1977) also examined the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement with elementary school students (grades 3 to 6 inclusive and grades 4 and 6 respectively).

Their results were similar to previous findings in that a positive but low correlation was demonstrated between the two variables.

However, it is to be noted that Boucher (1968) intimated that the instruments used in her study were not totally adequate for the task. Also, Mintz and Miller (1977) felt that the instruments used in their study may have led to the low correlations.

Thomas and Hartley (1980) found that dyslexic students, aged 8 to 10 had overall lower levels of self-concept than classmates reading at or above grade level. Vereen (1980) reported similar findings in her study of fifth-grade students. The students who scored higher on reading achievement tests also obtained higher ratings on measures of self-concept. Those students whose reading scores were lower obtained lower ratings on measures of self-concept.

An investigation was undertaken by Bulkowsky and Willows (1980) to determine specific self-perceptions that might contribute to performance and motivational deficits in children with reading difficulties. Fifth-grade children of relatively good, average, and poor reading ability were assessed on tasks in which success and failure were manipulated. The findings were consistent with their predictions. The poor readers displayed low self-concepts and learned helplessness. They were less persistent and less confident than good or average readers and they attributed failure to personal incompetence rather than lack of effort or even bad luck. Similar results were found by Johnson (1981) in a study of boys aged 9- to 12-years.

In this study failing readers held low self-concepts, attributed success to factors outside of self, and attributed failure to personal incompetence.

In another study, Toth (1991) found different results. Her study investigated whether significant differences existed in reading achievement and self-concept among samples of above grade level readers, developmental readers, and below grade level readers. There were 40 children in the study, from two heterogeneously grouped fourth-grade classes in a private school, who completed measures of reading achievement and self-concept. No significant differences existed between reading achievement and self-concept in any of the groups. The investigator suggested that although the trend for above grade readers to have higher self-concept scores was seen in the sample, the absence of a pattern of gradually diminishing self-concept scores for the developmental sample and the below grade level sample might be due to the relatively small sample size. The investigator felt that the same study would yield results more compatible with the research if the sample population were larger.

Rogers, Smith, and Coleman (1978) attempted to explain the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept in terms of the social comparison theory. They hypothesized that the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement was shown most strongly within the context of the social comparison group or classroom. According to this social comparison theory, the importance of academic achievement for self-concept lay not in the child's absolute level of achievement but in the children's perceptions of how their achievement compared

with their classmates, their social comparison group. In their study there were 159 academic underachievers aged 6 to 12 from 17 different classrooms who were administered achievement and self-concept tests. Results were analyzed in two different ways, and showed that on all seven aspects of the self-concept measures, the high reading achievement group held the highest self-concept scores and the low reading achievement group held the lowest self-concept scores. However, when results were analyzed, irrespective of within class standing (i.e., good, average, and poor readers), there were no significant differences among groups in self-concept scores. The results strongly supported the basic hypothesis that the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept was strongly manifested within the context of the social comparison group which in this case was the classroom. The students compared their levels of achievement to that of their classmates and then formed their self-concepts based on the results.

Following is a review and discussion of studies that have academic self-concept and academic/reading achievement as variables.

An extensive research study comprising three projects over a six-year investigation by Brookover and his associates (Brookover, Patterson, and Thomas, 1962; Brookover, LePere, Hamachek, Thomas and Erickson, 1965; and Brookover, Erickson, and Joiner, 1967) tracked students from 7th through 12th grade in an effort to determine the relationship of students' self-concepts to their academic achievements. They reported that self-concept of ability (i.e., academic self-concept)

was significantly and positively related to academic achievement. This finding was corroborated by Singh (1972) in his study of seventh-grade Newfoundland students.

Marx and Winne (1980) examined the relationship between academic achievement and the academic, social, and physical dimensions of self-concept in 419 children enrolled in fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grades. Marx and Winne found academic achievement and academic self-concept to be positively related.

Marsh, Parker, and Smith (1983) attempted to validate the between-networks relations of self-concept and academic achievement for three diverse samples of fifth- and sixth-grade students. They reported that each of the nonacademic self-concept scores were virtually uncorrelated with each of the academic measures. However, each academic self-concept score was substantially correlated with academic achievement measures. In addition, the academic achievement measures were more highly correlated with the specific academic self-concept measure to which it was most logically related (e.g., the correlation between reading achievement and self-concept in reading).

Multi-trait multi-method analysis was used by Marsh, Smith, Barnes, and Butler (1983) as part of a more intensive investigation that provided between-network findings concerning self-concept and academic achievement. This study was based on two samples of students in grades 4, 5 and 6 and their results replicated the findings of the study by Marsh, Parker, and Smith (1983). For each of the two populations, academic achievement measures were uncorrelated with each of the nonacademic

measures. Academic achievement measures were found to be most highly correlated with the area-specific self-concept that was most logically linked to the particular academic achievement measure (e.g., reading self-concept and reading achievement). Based on the results of this longitudinal study, the investigators suggested that changes in self-concept over time are multi-dimensional and are specific to different dimensions of self-concept. Although self-concept was found to be relatively stable, changes that do take place are reliable and specific to particular facets of self-concept.

In reviewing the literature, studies conducted between the specific variables of academic/reading achievement and reading self-concept were almost non-existent. The following section will discuss four studies that were located.

Jason and Dubnow (1973) conducted a study of 231 fifth-grade students and found a significant relationship between self-perception of reading abilities and actual achievement in reading. Brown (1992) in her study of 60 second-grade urban Newfoundland students found a significant positive relationship between reading self-concept and reading comprehension. In her study of 90 sixth-grade rural Newfoundland students, Byrne (1993) concluded that there was a significant relationship between reading self-concept and reading comprehension. As well, Legge (1994) in her study of 40 grade two urban Newfoundland students also found a significant relationship between reading self-concept and reading comprehension.

According to Gorrell (1990), studies have provided mainly correlational evidence for the relationship between self-concepts and academic achievement. It has

been concluded by many writers that there is a predictable cause-and-effect relationship between self-confidence and performance but self-concept theory has not succeeded in demonstrating this phenomenon as strongly and as often as proponents of the theory would expect. A prevailing problem associated with self-concept theory and research has been that of using self-concept as a global construct employing generalized self-concept measures to assess specific treatment effects, although that was not the case in the studies conducted by Brown (1992), Byrne (1993), and Legge (1994). Despite the fact that many studies have shown positive correlations between self-concept and school achievement, further investigations of the relationship are needed.

Causality Between Self-Concept and Academic Achievement

Byrne (1982) stated that there appeared to be little argument with the notion that one's self-perception played a major role in influencing one's behaviour. As a result of using this rationale, many researchers have concluded that self-concept stands in a causal relationship with academic achievement.

Studies made of kindergarten students' self-concept (Wattenberg and Clifford, 1964; McMichael, 1977; Strain, Kerr, Stagg, Lenkner, Lambert, Medlesohn, and Franca, 1983; and Corroero and Turner, 1985) all indicated that the students' self-concepts were already formed before they entered school and that reading problems

did not cause poor self-concepts. Instead, the poor self-concepts had a negative effect on reading achievement.

On the other hand, Kifer (1975) in his longitudinal study of students from grades 2 through 8 revealed in his findings that successful achievement is antecedent to a positive self-concept. Kifer argued that success and failure by themselves are not sufficient but that it is the pattern of success/failure and the accumulations of experiences which affect an individual's self-concept. Furthermore, the relationship became stronger as success and failure became prolonged and as a pattern of accomplishments emerged.

Also, Calsyn and Kenny (1977) revealed academic achievement as causally stronger than self-concept. Their study involved 556 adolescents and was a reanalysis of the Brookover et al. (1962, 1965, 1967) data over a five-year-period using cross-lagged panel design.

Calsyn and Kenny (1977) supported Scheirer and Kraut's (1979) conclusion that self-concept was an outcome variable rather than a causal variable. They reviewed published studies and 18 doctoral dissertations concerned with the impact of intervention programs on the self-concept and academic achievement of school children and found no evidence of a causal connection between self-concept and academic achievement.

Markland and Hanse (1984) followed a group of 46 underachievers from first to sixth grade. They were tested for self-concept development at various intervals. The

results indicated that the poor readers always maintained a more negative self-concept than a matched reference group. The students who had overcome their reading problem by sixth grade had developed a more positive self-concept. Markland and Hanse suggested that these results implied that reading performance in the school influenced self-concept.

Other researchers reported different findings. McIntire and Drummond (1977) in their study of 72 boys and 72 girls investigated the relative contribution of a variety of variables to self-concept. The contributions of demographic, achievement, and global personality measures were assessed. They did not find a causal relationship between academic achievement and self-concept and they concluded that personality, rather than achievement, ability, or demographic factors tended to be predictive of self-concept. They also added that their study still could not account for one half of the variance.

Maruyama, Rubin, and Kingsbury (1981) employed causal modelling techniques on longitudinal data of 4- to 15-year-olds. Their study suggested that self-concept and academic achievement may not be causally related. Byrne (1986) drew similar conclusions. She applied a structural equation model to data collected on 929 high school students to validate the self-concept construct. In this study, causal predominance between academic achievement and self-concept was not established.

Pottebaun, Keith, and Ehly (1986) took subjects from a large project of 58,728 high school students in a longitudinal study and applied cross-lagged panel correlation

to data collected on achievement and self-concept to see if a causal relationship could be found and the direction of the causality. The results suggested that there was no significant causal relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Rather, the observed relationship was the result of one or more uncontrolled and unknown third variable, for example social class or ability.

In summary, even though a definite relationship between the two constructs has been empirically well-established, the direction of causality has not yet been determined. Some researchers imply that self-concept determines academic achievement while others hold the opposing view that academic achievement is a predominant determiner of self-concept (Byrne, 1982). This conclusion by Byrne supported the findings from other reviews of the literature (Purkey, 1970; Zirkel, 1971; West and Fish, 1973; Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976; and Scheirer and Kraut, 1979). Others, including Purkey (1970), maintain that there is "a continuous interaction between the self and academic achievement and that each directly influences the other" (p.23).

Gender and Self-Concept

Wylie (1979) in a comprehensive review emphasizing American research conducted prior to 1977 concluded that there was no evidence of sex differences in overall self-concept at any age level. However, she suggested the possibility that there are differences in specific components of self-concept that are lost when summing

across items to obtain a total score. Battle (1985) in his research also reported that there were no significant differences in the various dimensions of self-concept (general, social, home, and school) but he did discover that gains were made by boys as they matured. Also, Brown (1992) found no differences between males and females in students' self-concepts of peer and parent relations. In contrast, several Australian studies have shown that boys have higher self-concepts than do girls. The sex differences may depend upon the component of self-concept, the age studied, and the self-concept instrument being used (Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers, 1975; and Smith, 1975, 1978; as cited by Marsh, Barnes, Cairns, and Tidman, 1984), as well as cultural differences in the socialization of reading.

Marsh, Smith, and Barnes (1985) in a study of 559 fifth-grade Australian students concluded that girls had a higher level of reading self-concept than boys but had a lower level of math self-concept. With regard to reading self-concept, Brown (1992) in her study of second-grade urban Newfoundland students reported similar results with girls having a higher level than boys. However, Byrne (1993) in her study of sixth-grade rural Newfoundland students and Legge (1994) in her study of second-grade urban Newfoundland students concluded that there were no differences in reading self-concepts between boys and girls.

Teachers' behaviours and expectations of boys and girls may be a contributing factor to differences found in the sexes with regard to self-concept. Elauig and Harlow (1973) reported that males received more attention than females do from

teachers and that when the teacher is female this can result in lower self-concept for females. In contrast, Samuels (1977) suggested though, that females more than males perceived their teachers' feelings toward them as positive. These results, although conflicting, show the influence of others on self-concept.

In summary, the relationship between gender and self-concept may depend upon cultural differences, nationality, age, the self-concept instruments being used, the wording of the items, and the specific aspects of self-concept that are being emphasized. Despite the ambiguous findings, several sex differences on the Self-Description Questionnaire developed by Marsh (1990a) can be predicted on the basis of sexual stereotypes in particular cultures (Marsh, Smith, and Barnes, 1981). According to Marsh, Smith, and Barnes, girls in Australia, should have better self-concepts in reading while boys should have better self-concepts in mathematics and physical abilities.

Parental Relationships and Self-Concept

According to Samuels (1977) the first "significant others" in the lives of children are their parents. Research has tried to measure specific parent-child processes that affect self-concept. There are several researchers who have put considerable emphasis on the "looking glass" theory (Cooley, 1902; and Gecas, Calonico, and Thomas, 1974). This theory supported the predominance of reflected

appraisals that children received from significant others. According to this theory, how parents perceive and treat their children result in an unfavourable or favourable self-concept. There are other researchers who have emphasized the "modelling theory" or "social learning" theory (Bandura and Walters, 1963; Bandura and Kupers, 1964; and Bandura, 1969) which stressed the imitation of the child of the parents' behaviour. This theory suggested that a child's self-concept was positively related to parental self-concept.

Research evidence has supported the notion that acceptance of self is related to acceptance of others. When applied to parents and children, the treatment of children by their parents can be expected to reflect their self-feelings. Parents who have accepted themselves are likely to accept their children, treat their children warmly, and have children who then accept themselves. In essence, both the "looking glass" and the "modelling" theory are both operative here.

Coopersmith (1967) found that higher self-concepts in children were associated with "authoritative" parents. Authoritative parents tended to have children who were self-assertive, independent, friendly with peers, and had a high motivation to succeed. Coopersmith claimed that the reason why authoritative parents related to higher self-concepts in children was because this style of parenting helped the child develop inner controls and clear definitions. The parents also conveyed the message that the child was worthwhile.

Yamamoto (1972) stated that the parents were the key persons in self-concept development. For most children, the first years of their lives are in the home. Even after entering school and participating in activities, the home remains the center of children's lives until they begin their own home. As a result, the role of a parent in a child's psychological development assumes prime importance. Some parents need a realization of the importance of the first months of life and the continual awareness of the parental behaviours which influence a child's developing self-concept. Parents are the first people to affect the development of children's self-concept and they continue to be significant throughout the child's life (Labenne and Greene, 1969).

Felker (1974) also noted that in the first years of life, the most important significant others are the parents. Felker suggested that parents influence the development of their child's self-concept in three basic ways: as primary models for the developing behaviour of the child; as primary feedback agents acknowledging how the child's behaviour is influencing others; and as the primary evaluator of the behaviour of the child (p. 44).

Samuels (1977), in reviewing a group of studies, has summarized the results. The studies reviewed suggested that parental love manifested by warmth, supportive encouragement, realistic expectation, consistency, and a balance between protectiveness and reward rather than punishment was more likely to result in a positive self-concept. In addition, mothers who have positive self feelings were more likely to follow the child-rearing practices just described.

Swayze (1980) agreed with Yamamoto, Samuels, and Felker in stating that the home, the family and the parents were key figures in the life of children as they grow from infancy into childhood, then adolescence, and into adulthood. Swayze reported that research indicated that mothers who exhibited affectionate warmth toward their children had children with high self-concepts. Also, studies revealed that fathers who took an active and supportive role in child-rearing had children of high self-esteem. Thus, a positive relationship was found to exist between children with high self-concepts and good parental relationships.

Amato and Ochilree (1986) reported that a family environment that was conducive to the development of competence was one in which a child's mastery attempts are encouraged, children are given responsive and realistic feedback, and their emotional environment is one of warmth and support.

A number of studies were reviewed by Amato and Ochilree and they reported that family environments that promoted competence were those that had the following characteristics:

1. Parents encourage the child to explore and manipulate the environment.
2. Parents talk frequently with the child.
3. Parents have a close, supportive relationship with the child.
4. Parents have high educational expectations and aspirations for the child.
5. Parents provide assistance with schoolwork.
6. Parents point out the consequences of behaviour to the child.

7. Parents use authoritative, rather than authoritarian or permissive styles of parenting.
8. Family life is relatively free of overt conflict between members (p.48).

Amato and Ochilree (1986) concluded in their study that self-esteem, which was discussed as one form of competence, was more strongly associated with interpersonal processes such as parents talking to children and helping them, family unity, and parents' aspirations and expectations, rather than with structural resources such as income level or social status.

Silvernail (1985) summed up the role of parents in this way:

Unquestionably, the parental care received in the early years plays an enormous role in defining the child's self-image. A supportive environment, with many stimuli and visible love and care on the part of parents, will enhance the development of a psychologically sound and stable self-concept. An opposite environment will, in all likelihood, contribute to the development of children who are psychologically crippled (p.12).

To summarize, parents are the most important significant others in the first years of life and are key persons in self-concept development. Parents who have positive self-concepts are likely to create an environment which promotes the development of positive self-concepts in their children. This warm, supportive environment with respect between parent and child is conducive to developing positive self-concepts in children.

Peer Relationships and Self-Concept

According to Felker (1974), as children move from their home environment, their sense of worth is vested to a greater degree, in the competence they acquire. During the preschool period, the child begins to judge his self-worth partly on the basis of his competence with peers. The child who has not developed a sense of belonging and the security that accompanies such a sense will likely be hindered as he moves out into the world away from the family environment. Fearfulness and lack of confidence will prevent good peer relationships and result in the beginnings of a negative self-concept. In contrast, security provides the basis for confidence that children can meet the world without excessive fear, and a feeling that they will be accepted as part of the social group in which they find themselves. Once they step out into the wider world, the competence which they have developed will enhance the beginnings of a positive self-concept.

The following information was based on research provided by studies using the Florida Key (Pukey, Cage and Graves, 1973). The students who scored high in relating identified closely with classmates and got along well with classmates. Students who scored low on relating seemed unable to involve themselves in school activities or with other students. This lack of relating, resulting in being ignored by their peer group, is an intolerable situation for most students. Consequently, their self-concept is affected. As stated by Maehr, Mensing, and Nafeger (1962), it is clear

that peer relationships have significance influence on self-concept.

According to Samuels (1977), research indicated that children who felt good about themselves tended to be adjusted socially and to be more accepted by their peers. It appeared that the social acceptance increased the self-concept. As the children succeeded with their peers, they felt better about themselves and continued to interact with them. On the other hand, children who worried about failing, because of past experiences of fear, feel like failures so they do not get involved in a group. The more of a failure children perceive themselves, the more inadequate they feel and the less they get involved.

The following section will discuss studies that investigated self-concept and peer relationships.

Heathers (1955) studied 40 2- to 5-year-olds at the Fels Institute. It was observed that socially competent children engaged more in social play, were more assertive, and sought attention or approval from children more than from adults.

Several researchers (Coopersmith, 1959; Carlson, 1963; Williams and Cole, 1968; and Richmond and White, 1971) all studying fifth- and sixth-grade students, found that children with positive self-concepts were more likely to have high peer status than the children with low self-concepts.

Teigand (1966) in a study of fifth-grade students found that academic achievers were better adjusted and chosen more often by their peers in work and play situations.

Henderson and Long (1971) studied 95 black lower-class children a year after school entrance. They found that in comparing children's self-social concepts (self-concept of relations with others), behaviour ratings by teachers, and reading behaviour of children, that the children in the first grade who were reading had a mature independence. The nonreaders were overdependent and those who were not promoted were socially withdrawn.

In summary, it appeared from a review of the literature that children who were adjusted socially tended to be more accepted by their peers. As children moved from the home environment to the wider world, their competence with peers enhanced their self-concept. Fearfulness and lack of confidence prevented good peer relationships, resulting in the beginning of a negative self-concept.

Attitudes to Reading

Attitudes toward reading have been defined in many different ways. According to Good (1973), an attitude is "a predisposition to react specifically towards an object, situation, or value which is usually accompanied by feelings and emotions" (p.49). Alexander and Filler (1976) considered reading attitude to consist of a system of feelings related to reading. These feelings would cause a learner to either approach or avoid a reading situation. Smith (1990) defined reading attitude as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that make reading more or less probable"

(p.215). Also, Cothorn and Collins (1992) defined attitudes as the long term result of experiences and resulting beliefs which become "generalized and incorporated into a broader conceptual network representing the individual's understanding of cultural expectations and consequences regarding behaviour" (p.86). In their study, Thames and Reeves (1994), who drew their definition from the research of reading authorities and educational psychologists, defined attitude as a combination of feelings and behaviours related to a specific learning situation. According to Thames and Reeves, attitudes serve as a major factor in the learner's receptivity to activities related to the learning situation.

According to Trelease (1989), there are 42 million children in the United States who can't read, won't read, or hate to read. Educators have become increasingly aware that not only are there many illiterate individuals within the United States, there are a growing number of alliterate individuals. Alliterate individuals have the ability to read, but choose not to. They lack the habit of reading (Vacca and Vacca, 1993).

Several researchers (Heilman, 1972; Bond and Tinker, 1973; and Harris and Sipay, 1985; as cited by White, 1989) have all indicated that if reading habits are to be retained in later life, attitudes toward reading must be developed and maintained. Link (1984) concluded that " a child's attitude toward reading affects his/her reading interest, and reading interest affects the child's reading habits" (p.21). Dryden (1982) claimed that the most crucial index of the kinds of readers that children will become

is determined by their attitudes toward reading. Cullinan (1987) agreed with Dryden in stating that it has been widely believed by educational professionals that the development of positive attitudes toward reading in the formative years of schooling will create students who are lifelong readers. Recently, reading theorists have been emphasizing the importance of the affective domain in reading education (Cramer and Castle, 1994; Kline, 1994; McKenna, 1994; Nell, 1994; and Fisher, 1994). Smith (1990) emphasized the importance of developing positive reading habits among students but stated that more research is needed to determine effective ways to promote positive attitude development during the formative years of elementary school.

Students' attitudes to reading is an affective factor which has a role to play in reading achievement. Roney (1984) felt that if children do not view reading as both enjoyable and immediately useful they will not regard it favourably and will fail to develop the habit. As a result, they lack motivation to read and will not read (Allington, 1983; Anderson et al., 1985; and Winograd and Smith, 1987). Because time spent reading affects reading achievement, the reading achievement of low achievers is below grade level. Brown and Briggs (1989) stated that students who develop positive attitudes toward reading will approach reading instruction with a greater possibility of being successful. Kennedy and Halinski (1978) found that good readers have a more positive attitude toward reading than poor readers do. Also, the poor attitude of disabled readers may have a negative effect on reading achievement.

Positive attitudes produce a motivational stimulus that promotes learning while negative attitudes result in a lack of motivation and persistent effort. Anderson, Tollefson and Gilbert (1985) noted that "What is not predictable is whether lack of proficiency in reading stems from unfavourable attitudes or whether it is the other way around. Probably, the truth can be in either direction" (p.15).

Heathington and Alexander (1984) felt that teachers have recognized and been aware of the importance of attitudes in reading. Positive attitudes have been considered so important by teachers that it is rated on a higher scale than activities such as sight words, word meaning, silent reading, structural analysis, or study skills. Duffy and Roehler (1989) emphasized that it is just as crucial that teachers be as systematic and dedicated to developing attitude goals as they are to any other aspect of reading. They stated, "At any stage of developmental reading growth, you must include attitude development as an important part of your reading curriculum" (p.84).

Fredericks (1982) maintained that the elementary school years are crucial in developing attitudes because attitudes develop early in a child's life. Data from a review of 110 research studies between 1900 and 1977 (Davis,1978) indicated that as teachers plan instruction they need to be aware of students' attitudes. Careful planning on the part of the teachers can help students develop positive attitudes.

Cramer and Castle (1994) advocated four beliefs as central to any literacy education program.

1. Affective aspects of reading are equal in importance to cognitive aspects.
2. Affective aspects of reading instruction are too often neglected.
3. Affective elements of reading can and should be measured.
4. More systematic research is needed in the affective areas of reading (p.3).

According to Teale (1983), attitudes cannot be easily measured. This has, according to Cramer (1975), hindered the study of attitudes toward reading. It has been hard to adequately develop standardized tools for measuring attitudes. However, there is consensus that individuals do seem to have attitudes about reading. In order to provide educators with a more accurate picture of the expressed feelings of students toward reading, formal assessment techniques should be used (Epstein, 1980). Despite frequent testimonies to the importance of developing positive attitudes, a lot of research has not been done in this affective domain, and results have shown contradictory outcomes (Cullinan, 1987).

In recent years, however, educators have made some important strides in measuring affective elements. McKenna and Kear (1990) developed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) which was used in the present study. Additionally, Henk and Melnick (1992) created the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) to measure how intermediate level students feel about themselves as readers. This instrument was developed in response to calls in the professional literature for instruments that would measure the way readers appraise themselves (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

Attitudes to Reading and Self-Concept

Some research has indicated the existence of a relationship between attitude to reading and self-concepts. Research has shown that disabled readers often lack motivation and exhibit poor attitudes toward reading and that these characteristics are often outgrowths of a negative self-concept (Cook, 1988).

Zimmerman and Allebrand (1965) studied 71 poor readers and 82 good readers from fourth- and fifth-grade classes. When comparing scores on the personality test, the poor readers were below average on feelings of self-worth, self-reliance, and belongingness, and held feelings of discouragement and hopelessness, while the good were better adjusted in every area. In one part of the study students had to create stories. The good readers created stories emphasizing effort, practice, and long-term goals while the poor readers composed stories that stressed discouragement and little effort. Zimmerman and Allebrand concluded that good readers were more internally motivated and well-adjusted than poor readers which resulted in more effort and persistence when striving for success.

Claytor (1979) found similar results in a study of 154 boys and 130 girls from regular fifth-grade classrooms. Claytor demonstrated a positive relationship among attitude to reading, self-concept, behaviour, and reading achievement. Students with poor attitudes to reading also had low self-concepts, behaviour problems, and difficulty with reading. Quandt (1972) reported a positive correlation between low

attitude and low self-concept with the correlation becoming stronger as the students aged. Additionally, Brown (1992) also concluded that there was a strong relationship between grade two students' reading self-concept and reading attitude.

As well, Briggs (1987) stated that a student's self-concept has an impact on his attitude toward reading as well as the amount of effort put forth. Briggs suggested that if teachers can help students improve their self-concept, they will be better able to develop positive attitudes.

Alexander and Filler (1976) proposed that there are two important phenomena, counteraction and the spiralling process, present in studies of self-concept and attitude. Counteraction is the result of repeated negative experiences with reading, which causes the learner to avoid the act of reading through disinterest, refusal, or lack of effort. The spiralling process may be applied to both proficient and poor readers. It refers to behaviours associated with the act of reading which become increasingly extreme in either a positive or negative direction making it difficult to redirect behaviour.

Thames and Reeves (1994) felt that an exploration of the interactive nature of self-concept and attitudes toward academic areas is needed. It is not known whether affective intervention first improves students' self-concepts, then their attitudes, and then their performances, or whether in the three areas there is simultaneous improvement. Answers to these kinds of questions are needed in order for educators to design intervention programs that will be successful with poor readers.

Recent research by Henk and Melnick (1992) proposed a possible answer to these questions. According to Henk and Melnick, self-perceptions can impact upon students' overall orientation toward the process of reading. Students who believe that they are good readers probably have a rich history of reader engagement and exhibit a strong likelihood of continued positive interactions with print. In contrast, students who perceive themselves as poor readers have probably not experienced much success in reading. It is very likely that these students will not look toward reading as a source of gratification. Looking at the process of reading in this light, it is not hard to imagine direct links between readers' self-perceptions and their subsequent reading behaviour, habits, and attitudes. How students feel about themselves as readers could clearly influence whether reading would be sought after or avoided, the amount of effort that would be put into reading, and how persistently comprehension would be pursued.

In summary, some research has indicated the existence of a relationship between attitudes to reading and reading self-concept although more research seems warranted. Also, further research on the interactive nature of self-concept, attitudes toward reading and reading comprehension is required.

Reading Attitude and Achievement

Many educators believe that students' attitudes toward reading are directly related to their achievement in that area. Teale (1983) stated that it is widely accepted that a positive attitude contributes to achievement and therefore, it should be considered when assessing reading.

In general, the relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement has been supported by research. Students who read well usually exhibit more positive attitudes toward reading than do students who are categorized as poor readers. As children experience a lack of success in reading, their attitude toward reading and their expectancies about reading performance become more negative (Lipson and Wixson, 1991). As attitudes become more negative, students put forth less effort, which then in turn produces a cyclic pattern of failure (Butkowsky and Willows, 1980 and Dweck and Bempachat, 1983). A number of researchers have found positive correlations between students' attitudes toward reading and their achievement in reading (Alexander and Filler, 1976; Hall, 1978; Fredericks, 1982; Wigfield and Asher, 1984; Walberg and Tsai, 1985; and Byrne, 1993).

However, from a review of the literature, this relationship demonstrated between reading attitude and achievement appears to be somewhat inconsistent. In this section studies will be reviewed that will point out that, despite the fact that there are positive correlations between students' attitudes toward reading and their achievement

in reading, there are inconsistencies.

An assessment of students' attitudes toward reading was conducted by Johnson (1964) with elementary students from four schools in Oregon. In general, there appeared to be low positive correlations between students' expressed attitudes toward reading and their scores on the reading achievement tool used in the study.

Cramer (1975) conducted a study on 124 11th and 12th grade students at two Wisconsin high schools. The Estes Reading Attitude Scale was used to assess subjects' attitude toward reading. In this study a significant correlation was observed between reading comprehension and reading attitude.

Kennedy and Halinski (1975) administered a 70 item Reading Attitude Inventory to 927 secondary students. Results showed that good readers have a more positive attitude toward reading than poor readers. A level students scored significantly higher than B students, and B students scored significantly higher than students with lower grades. This study demonstrated a positive relationship between attitude and achievement.

Hall (1978) investigated the relationship of reading attitude to achievement in fifth-grade students. A significance difference was indicated between every level of achievement. High achievers had significantly more positive attitudes than either middle or low achievers and middle achievers had significantly more positive attitudes than low achievers. Even though data from the study revealed that achievement was highly correlated to reading attitudes, this did not imply a cause/effect relationship.

The results suggested that when achievement improved, attitudes often improved, and when attitude improved, achievement often improved.

Crews (1978) concluded that attitude toward reading and reading achievement were significantly correlated at the sixth-grade level. This study investigated the attitude toward reading of middle school students at the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade levels. Attitudes toward reading and reading achievement were not significantly correlated at the seventh- and eighth-grade levels.

Roettger, Szymczuk, and Millard (1979) conducted a study concerned with attitudes and achievement in reading. They found that the correlation between attitude and achievement scores was significant but low. They concluded that despite the assumption that a positive attitude is essential to read successfully, attitudes cannot be used to predict academic achievement.

Lewis (1979) studied the relationship between attitude and reading success of 149 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students. Their scores from a reading attitude inventory were correlated with combined scores on the subtests of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. There was a statistically significant relationship between the reading attitude survey and scores from the reading tests. However, the low magnitude of the correlation limited the practical significance of the finding.

Lohman (1983) in his study investigated the attitudes of normal and disabled readers toward reading. The subjects were 40 normal and 40 disabled readers from grades 3 through 6. A standardized reading achievement test was used to determine

whether students would be categorized as normal or disabled. The Estes Attitude Scale was used to determine positive or negative readers. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in attitude toward reading among the normal and disabled readers. It was concluded by Lohman that there was a greater number of negative readers and less positive readers among the disabled readers' group than among the normal readers' group.

White (1989) found a low but consistent positive relationship between students' attitude toward reading and reading achievement in grades 1 through 8.

Following is a review of studies that were conducted to determine the attitudes toward reading of gifted students. Goostree (1981) studied the reading interests and attitudes of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students in Missouri. Goostree concluded that gifted students in general have highly positive attitudes toward reading. Bobel (1981) studied a gifted population and reported consistently positive attitudes toward reading. Also, Link (1984) investigated reading attitude and interests of gifted and talented students. The students were in fourth through ninth grade in North Central Texas. Through data collected, it was found that gifted and talented students have a very positive attitude toward reading.

Other studies that were reviewed revealed different results. A study by Roettger (1980) was directed at the unanswered question as to why some students have a good attitude toward reading despite having difficulty with it, while other students who read very well have very little interest in reading. Roettger conducted

a study of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students who were selected because they contradicted the belief that students who read well have positive attitudes, while those who do not read well have negative attitudes. The students in the study had all completed the Estes Attitude Scales. Roettger found that students had different expectations of reading. Students who achieved high on the attitude assessment, but had low performance, viewed reading as a tool for survival. High performance students with low attitude saw reading as a means of gaining information to help them get good school grades. The commonly held belief that the high achiever has a positive attitude toward reading may be erroneous.

Foley, Honeker, and Crociata (1984) conducted a study with 60 seventh- and eighth-grade students who had a positive attitude toward reading, regardless of their achievement level. Of the 60 participants, only 5 students revealed a negative attitude: 1 student in the low ability group, 2 in the middle ability group, and 2 in the high ability group. Brown (1992) in her study of second-grade urban Newfoundland students had similar results.

As well, Russ (1989) conducted a study on attitude toward reading in a predominantly Hispanic East Los Angeles Junior High School. The gifted and talented class showed a higher positive attitude toward reading than the comparison group made up of three normal classes of grade sevens. This positive attitude correlated significantly with exceptional performance on the reading section of the California Reading Test. However, students who were still reading far below grade level showed

a very positive attitude toward reading.

To summarize, then, the results of the studies reviewed point out the inconsistent relationships between reading attitude and achievement. As Saks (1981) stated, "High achievers can have either high or low attitudes, and those with high attitudes have high or low achievement" (p.15-16). Thames and Reeves (1994) felt that during the past twenty-five years there has been an increased interest in the relationship between students' attitude toward reading and their achievement in reading. However, questions still remain about the exact nature of the relationship.

Attitude toward Reading and Grade Placements

It has been shown through studies that pre-schoolers have positive attitudes toward reading but that negative attitudes toward reading develop in the primary grades (Shapiro, 1979). There is little evidence to indicate why these attitudes become more negative. However, one of the reasons offered by Heathington and Alexander (1984) was the fact that primary grade teachers spent little classroom time attempting to develop positive attitudes toward reading. Swanson (1982) stated that when learning to read becomes more of a task, it is then that the negative attitudes are established. This observation has been supported in the findings by Johnson (1964); Arlin (1976) and Parker (1978).

Chall and Snow (1982) maintained that a major problem confronting educators was the decline of the acquisition of further literacy beyond grade 4. Holbrook (1988) cited the 1979-1989 National Assessment of Education Program in the United States. It indicated the decline in reading proficiency and interest in reading beginning at grade 4. Research results of Heimberger (1970), Chall and Snow (1982), and Holbrook (1988) indicated that students began to decline in reading proficiency and reading attitude at grade 4.

Grade level differences in students' attitudes toward reading were found in a review of the literature. Attitudes toward reading were assessed by Johnson (1964) in four elementary schools in Oregon. The analysis of variance showed significant differences in attitude toward reading between the different grade levels. Johnson concluded that students in lower grades indicated better attitudes toward reading than students in each successively higher grade tested.

Ashley (1970) determined that the peak time and the greatest amount of reading done was found to occur in the 10- to 11- year-old range. He felt that interest faded away sharply during the latter half of grade 6 and that the best chance of encouraging good reading habits lay in or before grade 4. Davis (1978) found similar results. In reviewing 110 research articles concerning students' attitudes toward reading, Davis concluded that attitudes toward reading became less positive with an increase in the age of the students. As well, Crews (1978) found that sixth-grade students reported significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than did seventh-

or eighth-grade students.

Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) found similar results. They conducted a study investigating the attitudes toward reading and the self-reported reading behaviours of 276 gifted students in grades 1 through 12. The general trend across age levels was for primary students to have the most positive attitudes and each advancing grade level to have less positive mean attitudes.

White (1989) found that attitudes toward reading appeared to be maintained throughout the grades until grade 8 in which there was a decrease in attitude toward reading. However, a study by Rains (1993) of 156 Western Kansas students found that fifth- and sixth-grade students had a significantly lower positive attitude toward academic and total reading than students in grades 1 through 4.

This is in contrast to results of a study by Askov and Fischbach (1973) which investigated the attitudes of 94 first- and third-grade students. In this study, grade level was not significantly related to attitude.

In summary, many studies in the review of the literature indicated that students have a more positive attitude toward reading in the primary grades and that this positive attitude decreased with each successive year thereafter. However, since there were inconsistencies, no decisive conclusions can yet be drawn in this area. According to Cloer and Pearman (1992), more research needs to be done on student attitudes as we approach the twenty-first century.

Gender and Attitude Toward Reading

Results of the studies reviewed indicated that there were mixed findings in the area of gender and attitudes to reading. Females, however, have generally been recognized by reading experts as being more interested in reading than males and having a more positive attitude toward reading (Askov and Fischbach, 1973; Kennedy and Halinski, 1975; Arlin, 1976; and Wallbrown, Levine, and Engin, 1981).

However, Alexander and Filler (1976) when reviewing differences between gender groups recommended that teachers not assume that girls have more positive attitudes toward reading than boys. White (1989) stated that there are a few beliefs held by some teachers that are sometimes, but not always, supported by research. Because teacher expectations may affect outcomes, these beliefs may be harmful. One of these beliefs is that girls have more positive attitudes toward reading than boys. Alexander (1983) cautioned teachers in making assumptions about the effects that sex may have on attitudes until the specific attitudes of students in their classrooms have been assessed. The teachers may discover that the findings may be different than expected. The following section will discuss studies that have indicated differences between males and females in their attitudes toward reading.

Johnson (1964) assessed students' attitudes toward reading. The T tests were used to test for significance in differences between the attitude toward reading of boys and girls. The results showed that the mean differences in attitudes toward reading

were higher for girls than for boys. Conclusions reached by Johnson was that girls in this study indicated slightly better attitudes toward reading than boys.

Crews (1978) concluded that middle school female students in grades 6, 7, and 8 reported significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than male students. One of Davis' (1978) major conclusions was that some research studies reported that girls had more positive attitudes toward reading, some studies reported that boys had more positive attitudes and some studies reported no difference in negative/positive attitudes and the sex of the participant.

Wallbrown, Levin, and Engin (1981) did a study with 312 fifth- and sixth-grade students from a rural northeastern Ohio school system. Their study provided information about gender differences in students' perceptions of their attitudes toward reading. Results of the study showed that boys are more likely to perceive themselves as having difficulty in reading and acknowledged the existence of this problem in response to attitudinal type questions. The mean difference between the boys and girls was statistically significant at the .0001 level. The girls perceived themselves as receiving more reinforcement from their teachers, parents, and friends in their reading than boys did. Girls also perceived themselves as valuing reading for their intrinsic worth as a source of information, learning, and emotional satisfaction to a greater degree than did boys. The study also indicated that boys had a tendency to become more emotionally upset when reading than did girls.

Goostree (1981) when studying the reading interests and attitudes of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade gifted students in Missouri also found that females consistently ranked higher in their attitude than boys. As well, Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) conducted a study investigating the attitude toward reading and the self-reported reading behaviours of 276 gifted students in grades 1 through 12. It was concluded that significant sex differences in attitudes toward reading were observed. As a group females reported more positive attitudes toward reading than did males.

Parker and Paradis (1986) studied 134 students in grades 1 through 6. The attitude scores for girls tended to be more positive than for boys throughout grades 1 through 6. However, caution was advised in overgeneralizing from the findings of the study because the mean differences between girls and boys was approximately only four raw points in the primary grades and six points in the intermediate grades. A similar finding was found in a study involving 124 11th and 12th grade Wisconsin students. It was noted by Cramer (1975) that female students scored slightly higher on the Estes Reading Attitude Scale but the differences were not significant.

Dwyer and Reed (1989) in studying the effects of sustained silent reading on the attitude of males and females in secondary school found that boys had significantly poorer attitude: toward reading than girls.

Ross and Fletcher (1989) studied attitude toward reading of 189 rural Tennessee children, and 202 children from a school in a university town. These children were in grades 3, 4, and 5. They discovered that girls had better attitudes

than boys.

Suhorsky (1989) studied the attitudes of 272 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students in three schools in a rural area of the United States. Findings indicated that female middle school students' attitudes toward reading were more positive than those of males. In addition, Smith (1990) found similar results. A longitudinal investigation of reading attitude development from childhood to adulthood was conducted by Smith. Measures of reading attitudes were collected from 84 subjects when they were in grades 1, 6, 9, and 12 and also when they were 5 years to beyond high school. Smith concluded that females had significantly higher positive attitude scores than males.

Richards (1991) conducted a study to measure how learning disabled children perceived reading and libraries. The children were fourth- and fifth-grade students from a middle class suburban community. The results of the study indicated that girls had higher average reading attitude scores than did boys. As well, Brown (1992) in her study of 60 second-grade urban Newfoundland students concluded that boys had less positive attitudes than girls.

Comiff (1993) in her study to determine how boys and girls regarded themselves as readers and their perceptions of what reading was all about found that several gender specific responses emerged. The boys appeared to value reading for its utilitarian uses more than girls did. More girls than boys associated reading with pleasure.

Following is a description of the studies in the research literature that reported no differences between males and females in their attitudes toward reading.

Hall (1978) pointed out that sex is not a determiner of more positive or more negative reading attitudes. Females do not always have better attitudes toward reading than males. The conclusion reached by Hall was that teachers must teach reading skills and work on improving students' attitudes toward reading without allowing bias toward sex to influence their attitude toward students.

Hammons, Knafle, Pascarella, and Cramer (1981) conducted studies to compare reading attitudes of 320 students, half of which were from an inner city school and half from a suburban school. Results indicated that the sex of the students had no effects on reading attitudes.

Byrne (1993), in her study of 90 sixth-grade rural Newfoundland students, failed to find a significant relationship between overall attitude to reading and gender. However, certain aspects of the Thomas Inventory and gender did correlate significantly. Boys reported enjoying reading less and enjoying reading to others less. As well, Legge (1994) in her study of 40 second-grade Newfoundland students concluded that there was no significant relationship between overall attitude to reading and gender.

Following is a description of studies that investigated whether children thought of reading as a male or female activity.

Mazurkiewicz's (1960) study which investigated socio-cultural influences on the reading attitudes of children showed a positive relationship between fathers' and sons' attitudes toward reading. Boys as well as their fathers thought that reading was a feminine activity.

Johnson's (1976) study supported the idea of socio-cultural reasons for reading attitudes. Johnson studied reading attitudes in four countries, England, Canada, Nigeria, and the United States. In both England and Nigeria boys felt that reading was for boys, while in Canada and the United States boys felt that reading was for girls. Johnson felt that the difference could be attributed to cultural influences.

Edwards (1989) conducted a study in the United States involving 100 children from grades 1 through 8 to investigate whether children thought of reading as a male or a female activity. Findings indicated that in grades 1 through 4 boys regarded reading as mostly a masculine activity, while in grade 5, boys regarded reading as mostly a masculine activity and girls regarded it as mostly a feminine activity.

In summary, conclusions from the studies reviewed indicated that there are mixed findings in the area of gender and attitude to reading. Edwards (1989) stated that based on an analysis of studies reviewed, it can be concluded that, if boys do think that reading is a feminine activity, it could be partly due to socio-cultural influences. With socio-cultural influences there are influences from teachers, parents, and society as a whole.

Gender and Reading Achievement

According to Maccoby (1976), girls in the primary and elementary grades usually show academic superiority over boys of the same age, especially in areas related to reading and language. According to Maccoby, this can be attributed to the fact that girls mature faster than boys during the first years of life. Logically, it would then be expected that girls would develop certain abilities earlier than boys.

Dwyer (1973) suggested four factors to explain sex differences in relation to reading achievement. These were:

1. The differential rate or level of maturation
2. Content of basal readers
3. The negative treatment of boys by female teachers
4. The differential cultural expectations for the male role

In a large sample testing in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the results of The Canadian Test of Basic Skills which was administered to grade four students during the fall, 1993, indicated that females exceeded males on the reading subtest. The grade equivalent score for males was 3.9 (39th percentile) while for females it was 4.1 (46th percentile). Additionally, the number of male students who received regular special education (programs in language arts and mathematics) for the year 1993-1994 was 7,623 while the number of female students was 3,678. Thus,

for Newfoundland and Labrador, it can be concluded from these statistics that girls appear to be experiencing more success in reading than boys.

In the following section studies will be reviewed to determine if a significant relationship between gender and reading achievement is reported in the research literature.

Gates (1961) conducted a study on gender differences in reading ability. The subjects were 13,114 American elementary students, 6,646 boys and 6,458 girls in grades 2 through 8. The students in the study took the Gates Reading Survey Tests of speed of reading, reading vocabulary and level of comprehension. Even in grade 2 (for which the tests were said to be so difficult they were not recommended) the girls obtained higher scores on all three tests. The average for all grades on the tests excluding grade 2 showed a superiority of slightly less than 0.2 standard deviations for the girls. The conclusion arrived at by Gates was that the study strongly confirmed that on the average females significantly outscored males on reading comprehension and vocabulary.

International comparisons point to girls' greater reading achievement in the United States, and American studies corroborated them (Yarborough and Johnson, 1980). They found strong agreement among most investigators that cultural factors and/or teacher bias accounted for early reading achievement differences. In their study Yarborough and Johnson found that boys lagged behind girls in reading until age 10 when sex differences became non-significant.

Wallberg and Tsai (1985) used data from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Education Program (NAEP) in the United States. This program employed a stratified, multi-staged sampling design with oversampling of low income and rural areas to determine the predictive factors that influenced cognitive achievement and affective factors as educational outcomes. A control variable, gender, was significantly related with achievement and attitude. It was found that girls scored higher and expressed more interest in reading than boys.

Ostling (1992) reviewed a recent report compiled by the Wellesley College for Research on Women. The report synthesized hundreds of studies of girls' achievement from preschool through grade 12. The Wellesley authors concluded that girls do better than boys in reading starting in the elementary years and continuing through high school. Both the Wellesley Report and the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States agreed that boys do worse in reading than girls.

The Northern Territory Department of Education (1992) published the results of the 1992 Primary Assessment Program in urban Northern Territory Schools in Australia for students in year 5 and 7. There was evidence that boys marginally outperformed girls in the measurement strand of mathematics but on all reading tests girls outperformed boys.

Cloer and Pearman (1992) described results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States. These results showed that females at ages 9, 13, and 17 outperformed the male counterparts in each of the six reading

assignments that were conducted from 1971-1990. It was revealed by these data (1991) that the reading proficiency of males still trailed that of females in 1990 at all five levels of difficulty. The gap between males and females was about the same in 1990 as in 1971. According to Rains (1993), this pattern was not a recent one. Since 1932 boys have outnumbered girls in remedial reading classes ranging from 2:1 to 10:1. However, Brown (1992), Byrne (1993), and Legge (1994) in studies of grades two, six, and two Newfoundland students respectively found no significant relationship between gender and reading comprehension.

Some research has attributed achievement differences between boys and girls to cultural variables. Following is a description of studies and discussion of the literature reviewed.

Kagan (1964) stated that sex role standards could be a factor in school achievement when he discovered that the majority of grade two and three students in his study considered many school subjects including books to be feminine.

Preston (1962) also attributed achievement differences favouring American girls over American boys to cultural variables. Because sex differences in achievement appeared to be reversed among German school children, Preston suggested that cultural and environmental factors rather than biological principles accounted for the sex differences in reading achievement. Preston proposed that German boys learn to read successfully primarily because reading is a "normal activity of the male" (p.353) in that country. According to Preston (1979), the opposite

appeared true for American males. Preston reported on research suggesting that American boys perceived reading as a feminine activity, and thus, not a normal male activity. To demonstrate his point, Preston (1979) returned to Germany to examine the effects of male and female teachers on the reading achievement of boys and girls. He determined that having male teachers did not help German boys learn any better than having female teachers.

Similar results to Preston (1962) and Kagan (1964) were found in a later study by Johnson (1972). In England and Nigeria boys outscored girls significantly, while in the United States and Canada the reverse was true. This investigation pointed to cultural rather than physiological factors as the source of such sex differences in reading learning rate.

In contrast to Preston's (1979) conclusions discussed above, modelling has been thought to play a role in gender differences in reading because society encourages children to model the same sex. Most elementary teachers in North America are females. This has been suggested as the reason for female superiority in reading on this continent. The opposite has been found in England, Nigeria, and West Germany where most elementary teachers are male and the boys are superior in reading (Finn, Dulberg, and Reis, 1979).

Parsons, Adler, and Kaczala (1982) found a positive correlation between parents' and teachers' expectations for children's achievement and their actual achievement. Because of their different expectations for girls and boys, parents and

teachers may reinforce different expectations between the sexes daily.

In Canada, as well as France and some other non-English speaking countries, girls are better readers than boys. But in cross-cultural studies, Israel and Jordan, for example, have no differences in reading achievement between males and females, while in England, Nigeria, India, and Germany boys surpassed girls in reading achievement. A similar study was conducted with fourth- and sixth-grade students from California and West Germany. American Californian females achieved significantly higher scores than American Californian males in sixth grade, while German females and males did not significantly differ at either grade level. These results suggested that cultural rather than biological factors are involved (Holbrook, 1988).

In summary, there are mixed findings in the research literature as to whether there are differences between males and females in their reading achievement. Factors that were discussed as possibly causing any differences between males and females in reading achievement were different levels of maturation, treatment of boys by female teachers, differential cultural expectations, content of basal readers, and modelling by students of same sex teachers who in North America are predominantly female.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among various aspects of self-concept, gender, reading attitude, and reading comprehension in a group of grade five students. The particular self-concepts included students' reading self-concept, students' self-concept of parental relationships, and students' self-concept of peer relationships. This chapter presents the hypotheses, describes the sample population, outlines the procedures, and discusses the instruments used for measuring purposes.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are developed from the research questions presented in Chapter 1 and are supported by the related research presented in Chapter 11. The testing instrument that was used to measure students' reading self-concept, students' self-concept of peer relations and students' self-concept of parent relations was the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1). This instrument measures self-concept in non-academic and academic areas. The testing instrument that was used to

measure reading attitude was the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) which gave three attitude measures (recreational reading attitude, academic reading attitude, and full-scale reading attitude). The specific divisions of self-concept (students' reading self-concept, students' self-concept of peer relations, and students' self-concept of parent relations) and reading attitude (recreational reading attitude, academic reading attitude and full-scale reading attitude) are reflected in the hypotheses. To measure reading comprehension, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, D 5/6, Form 3, second Canadian edition was used. The following hypotheses are stated as null hypotheses.

- Hypothesis 1: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 2: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their academic reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 3: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 4: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 5: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their academic reading attitude will be zero.

- Hypothesis 6: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 7: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 8: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their academic reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 9: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.
- Hypothesis 10: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their reading comprehension will be zero.
- Hypothesis 11: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their reading comprehension will be zero.
- Hypothesis 12: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their reading comprehension will be zero.
- Hypothesis 13: The relationship between grade five students' recreational reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.
- Hypothesis 14: The relationship between grade five students' academic reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.
- Hypothesis 15: The relationship between grade five students' full-scale reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.

- Hypothesis 16: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in their self-concept of peer relations.
- Hypothesis 17: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in their self-concept of parent relations.
- Hypothesis 18: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in reading self-concept.
- Hypothesis 19: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in recreational reading attitude.
- Hypothesis 20: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in academic reading attitude.
- Hypothesis 21: There will be no difference in grade five males and females in full-scale reading attitude.
- Hypothesis 22: There will be no difference in grade five males and females in reading comprehension.

Sample Population

This study was conducted with three classes of grade five students of varying reading ability in a three-stream elementary school in St. John's. The entire grade five enrolment consisted of 77 students. However, not all parents consented for their children to participate in the study. There were 59 students who did participate. One

student's score was considered to be outlying because she was a special education student who demonstrated a great degree of difficulty in following the instructions and coping with the comprehension test. Therefore, the study was conducted on the test scores of 58 students, 25 boys and 33 girls. However, 6 students were absent for part of the testing and as a result there were only 52 comprehension scores which included 24 boys and 28 girls.

Procedures

Before beginning the research, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Memorial University, (Appendix A), and also from School Board Personnel, (Appendix B), and School Administration, (Appendix C). A letter was sent to parents explaining the purpose of the testing and asking permission for their children to participate in the study, (Appendix D).

Testing took place on two separate days and each class was tested separately. The self-concept and reading attitude tests were administered on one day and the comprehension test was administered on another day of the following week. All tests were easily administered. The raw scores obtained on the three instruments were computed and coded using the SPSS package. Following coding, regular correlational analyses using the Pearson Product-Moment Method and regular T tests were performed to determine if the relationships among various self-concepts, reading

attitude, reading comprehension and gender were statistically significant.

Instruments

The Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1)

This test (Marsh, 1990a) measures self-concept in four nonacademic areas (Physical Ability, Physical Appearance, Peer Relations and Parent Relations), three academic areas (Reading, Mathematics and General School), and a General Self Scale. However, for the purposes of this study, only two nonacademic areas (self-concept of peer relations and self-concept of parent relations) and one academic area (reading self-concept) were used. The raw scores for each of the three areas were summed and recorded for each student.

The Self-Description Questionnaire-1 can be administered individually or in groups (as was done in this study) and no special administration training is required. Total testing time is approximately 20 minutes. This consisted of the time required for the actual presentation of the test items, as well as time taken giving instructions, and answering any questions the children may have had.

The test consisting of 76 items altogether was administered by the researcher. The researcher read the items and the children were asked to respond to the simple declarative sentences (e.g., "I have lots of friends," "I like reading") with one of five responses: False, Mostly False, Sometimes False/Sometimes True, Mostly True, True.

Each of the eight Self-Description Questionnaire-1 scales being tested contained eight positively worded items. An additional 12 items were negatively worded in order to disrupt positive response biases. These items were not included in the self-concept scores since research has indicated that young children and adolescents do not give valid responses to such items (Marsh, 1990b).

An extensive manual accompanied the test. The manual included administration instruction, the theoretical framework upon which the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 is based. Also included were the percentile ranks and T scores by grade level and sex for the total and combined normative sample.

The primary basis for estimating reliability in Self-Description Questionnaire research has been the internal consistency of item responses on each of the Self-Description Questionnaire scales. Coefficient alphas for the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 based on the internal consistency of responses were computed for the normative sample. Coefficient alphas for the eight individual scale scores across all the responses varied from .80 to .92 (median = .86).

Because self-concept is a theoretical construct, a construct validation approach was used to test the validity of responses to the Self-Description Questionnaire-1. This type of approach requires that Self-Description Questionnaire-1 responses be related to a variety of external criteria, and that each of its factors be significantly correlated with other constructs to which it is logically related and less correlated with constructs to which it is logically unrelated. In the validity research, responses to the

Self-Description Questionnaire-1 were found to be related to age, sex, socioeconomic status, academic achievement, teacher ratings of achievement and inferred self-concept, peer ratings of inferred self-concept, responses to other self-concept instruments, student self-attributions for the perceived causes of their academic successes and failures, and experimental interventions designed to enhance self-concept. The Self-Description Questionnaire responses were systematically related to these external criteria in a way that was consistent with the theory, thus supporting the construct validity of the instrument (Marsh, 1990b).

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)

This is a group administered test (McKenna and Kear, 1990) which is designed to ascertain attitudes toward reading of children in grades 1 through 6. The test consisted of 20 items and took approximately 20 minutes to administer. The first 10 items reflected recreational reading attitudes and the second 10 items reflected academic reading attitudes. Each item was a brief, simply-worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of Garfield, the cartoon cat. Each Garfield pose depicted a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative. The test authors suggested emphasizing to the children that there are no right or wrong answers to encourage sincerity. A discussion of each of Garfield's poses (very happy, a little happy, a little upset, very upset) was also recommended to ensure that the children clearly understood each of Garfield's moods before proceeding to the test. The four-point scale of this test avoided a neutral central category which respondents

often select in order to avoid committing themselves. Each statement was read aloud slowly and clearly twice. The children were asked to circle the picture of Garfield which described how he or she felt.

The survey was scored by counting four points for the "very happy Garfield", three points for the "a little happy Garfield", two points for "a little upset Garfield", and one point for the "very upset Garfield". Three scores were obtained for each student: the total for the first 10 items related to attitude toward recreational reading, the total for the second 10 items related to attitude toward academic reading, and a composite score for all the items on the survey. All three scores were used in this study.

A major advantage of the ERAS has been its extensive norming. The ERAS exhibits solid validity and reliability characteristics which are two critical attributes given the potential importance of attitudinal indicators (Henk and Melnick,1995).

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test

This is a group administered test designed to test vocabulary and comprehension (MacGinitie and MacGinitie, 1992). For this study only the comprehension subtest was used. The comprehension test measured the students' ability to understand passages of prose and simple verse. The test contained 14 passages of various lengths, with a total of 48 questions about these passages. Some of the questions required constructing an understanding based on information that was explicitly stated in the passage. Other questions required constructing an understanding

based on information that was only implicit in the passage. Two practice items to be done with the children were provided. The children had 35 minutes to work through the test. Level D 5/6, Form 3, designed for use with grades 5 and 6 was used.

The raw score was obtained by counting the number of correct items. Tables in the manual allowed conversion of the raw scores to stanines, T scores, percentile ranks, grade equivalents and extended scale scores. Only the raw scores were used in this study.

All levels of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests have excellent reliability, and reliability coefficients from the fall standardization testing for grade 5 (with Form 3) are as follows: vocabulary .91, comprehension .91, and total for vocabulary and comprehension combined .95. Also, a number of steps were taken during the development of this edition of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests to ensure that the tests would be valid for most school reading programs (MacGinitie and MacGinitie, 1992).

Analysis of Data

The testing procedures yielded three self-concept scores (self-concept of parent relations, self-concept of peer relations and reading self-concept), three reading attitude scores (recreational reading attitude, academic reading attitude, and full-scale reading attitude) and one reading comprehension score. Regular correlational

analyses using the Pearson Product-Moment Method were performed to examine intercorrelations among the three self-concept scores, the three reading attitude scores and the one reading comprehension score. Regular T tests were performed to determine the influence of gender on self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension. Gender was the independent variable and self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension, the dependent variables.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the data collected in the study in order to determine if the questions presented in Chapter I and the hypotheses stated in Chapter III have been supported. The specific questions that were addressed were:

1. Are various self-concept scores and reading attitude scores related to reading comprehension in grade five students?
2. Is there a relationship between various self-concepts and reading attitude in grade five students?
3. Are there differences between grade five girls and grade five boys in reading attitude, self-concepts, and reading comprehension?

Besides descriptive statistics which generated means and standard deviations for the three tests, two statistical procedures were applied to the raw scores collected. Regular correlational analyses, using the Pearson Product-Moment Method were employed to examine the relationships among measures of self-concept, reading attitude and reading achievement. T tests were used to determine the influence of gender on self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension. Gender was

considered an independent variable, and self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension were the dependent variables. In this chapter each of the hypotheses is restated and the data pertaining to that hypothesis is described. Tables are used to report the findings as well. Then, the data is examined and described.

Self-Concept and Attitudes to Reading

Measures obtained for the students' self-concepts of peer relations, self-concepts' of parent relations and reading self-concepts were correlated, using the Pearson Product-Moment Method, with the three reading attitude raw scores (recreational, academic and full-scale) to see if any relationships existed. The results obtained relate to tests of the first nine proposed hypotheses. Each of the hypotheses is restated and the significance of data relevant to it is discussed. The data collected for all nine hypotheses is reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Peer, Parent and Reading Self-Concepts and Reading Attitude

<u>r</u>	<u>RECREATIONAL</u>	<u>ACADEMIC</u>	<u>FULL-SCALE</u>
PEER	.0046	.1775	.0925
PARENT	.0906	.3978**	.2535
READING	.6547*	.4870*	.6240*

* = $p < .001$

** = $p < .01$

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .0046 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their recreational reading attitude. The relationship was not significant, consequently hypothesis 1 is accepted. Students' concepts of their relationships with their peers are unrelated to their recreational reading attitudes

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their academic reading attitude will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .1775 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their academic reading attitude. The relationship was insignificant, and hypothesis 2 is accepted. Students' concepts of their relationships with their peers are unrelated to their academic reading attitudes.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .0925 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their full-scale reading attitude. The relationship was not significant and the hypothesis is accepted. Students' conceptions of their relationships with their peers are unrelated to their overall reading attitudes.

For the first three hypotheses, dealing with the relationship between grade five students' perceptions of their peer relations and reading attitudes, no significant relationships could be found, leading to the acceptance of these three hypotheses as stated. There is no relationship between these grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their attitudes to reading.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .0906 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their recreational reading attitude. The relationship was not significant, consequently hypothesis 4 is accepted. Students' conceptions of their relationships with their parents are unrelated to their recreational reading attitudes.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their academic reading attitude will be zero.

A positive correlational coefficient of .3978 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their academic reading attitude. The relationship was significant at the .01 level. There was a significant positive relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their academic reading attitude. This finding, therefore, indicates that how these grade five students conceive of their relations with their parents has some relationship with how

they feel about academic reading. Students who have good relationships with their parents feel positive toward academic reading.

Hypothesis 6: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .2535 was computed between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their full-scale reading attitude. The relationship was insignificant and the hypothesis is accepted.

For hypotheses 4 to 6 dealing with the relationship between grade five students' perceptions of their parent relations and their attitudes to reading, a significant correlation was obtained between self-concept of parent relations and academic reading attitude leading to the rejection of hypothesis 5. No relationship was obtained between self-concept of parent relations and recreational and full-scale reading attitudes leading to the acceptance of hypotheses 4 and 6. However, there is a relationship between these grade five students' perceptions of their parent relations and their academic reading attitude.

Hypothesis 7: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their recreational reading attitude will be zero.

A positive correlational coefficient of .6547 was computed between grade five students' reading self-concept and their recreational reading attitude. The relationship was significant at the .001 level. There is a strong, significant relationship between

these grade five students' reading self-concept and their recreational reading attitude. Students who like to read for leisure purposes have good reading self-concepts while those who do not like to read for leisure purposes have poorer reading self-concepts.

Hypothesis 8: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their academic reading attitude will be zero.

A positive correlational coefficient of .4870 was computed between grade five students' reading self-concept and their academic reading attitude. The relationship was significant at the .001 level. There is a strong, significant relationship between these grade five students' reading self-concept and their academic reading attitude. Students who feel they are good academically have good reading self-concepts while those students who feel they are not good academically have poorer reading self-concepts.

Hypothesis 9: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their full-scale reading attitude will be zero.

A positive correlational coefficient of .6240 was computed between grade five students' reading self-concept and their full-scale reading attitude. The relationship was significant at the .001 level. There is a strong, significant relationship between these grade five students' reading self-concept and their full-scale reading attitude.

For hypotheses 7 through 9, dealing with students' reading self-concepts and their attitudes to reading, significant positive correlations were found, leading to the

rejection of hypotheses 7 through 9. There is a significant, positive relationship between these grade five students' reading self-concepts and their attitudes to reading. For these grade five students, no significant relationship was found between their perceptions of their peer relations and their reading attitude and their perceptions of their parent relations and their recreational and full-scale reading attitude. However, a significant relationship was found between these students' perceptions of their parent relations and their academic reading attitude. Also, a strong, significant relationship was found between these grade five students' reading self-concepts and all aspects of their attitude to reading.

Self-Concept and Reading Comprehension

The raw scores obtained on the peer relations' self-concept, parent relations' self-concept and reading self-concept were correlated with reading comprehension scores to determine if a relationship could be found between these self-concepts and students' reading comprehension at the grade five level. The results obtained pertaining to hypotheses 10 through 12, are presented in Table 2, and are discussed below.

Table 2

Peer, Parent and Reading Self-Concepts and Reading Comprehension

<u>r</u>	<u>Gates-MacGinitie</u>
PEER	-.0772
PARENT	-.1800
READING	.4868*

* = $p < .001$

Hypothesis 10: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their reading comprehension will be zero.

When the raw scores for peer relations' self-concept were correlated with the raw scores obtained on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, comprehension subtest, a negative correlational coefficient of -.0772 was obtained. This correlation was not statistically significant, and therefore, indicates that there is no relationship between these grade five students' perceptions of their peer relations and their reading comprehension.

Hypothesis 11: The relationship between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their reading comprehension will be zero.

A negative correlational coefficient (-.1800) was also found between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and reading comprehension. This correlation was not significant, and therefore, indicates that there is no relationship

between these grade five students' perceptions of their parent relations and their achievement in comprehension.

Hypothesis 12: The relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their reading comprehension will be zero.

When the scores obtained for reading self-concept were correlated with reading comprehension, a positive correlational coefficient of .4868, significant at the .001 level, was found. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between grade five students' reading self-concept and their achievement in reading comprehension.

For hypotheses 10 through 12 dealing with grade five students' peer relations, parental relations and reading self-concepts and their reading comprehension, a significant, positive correlation was found for reading self-concept and reading comprehension, leading to the rejection of hypothesis 12. No relationships were found between peer relations and parent relations' self-concept, leading to the acceptance of hypotheses 10 and 11. For these grade five students, there is a relationship between their reading self-concepts and their reading comprehension achievement. There is not, however, a relationship between these grade five students' self-concept of their peer and parental relations and how well they perform in reading comprehension.

Reading Attitude and Reading Comprehension

To determine if grade five students' attitudes to reading are related to their achievement in reading comprehension, the scores obtained for recreational, academic and full-scale reading attitudes were correlated with the reading comprehension scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The data from these correlations are reported in Table 3 and answer hypotheses 13 through 15.

Table 3

Reading Attitudes and Reading Comprehension

<u>r</u>	<u>Gates-MacGinitie</u>
RECREATIONAL	.4285**
ACADEMIC	.1476
FULL-SCALE	.3226***

**= P< .01

***= P< .05

Hypothesis 13: The relationship between grade five students' recreational reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.

A positive correlational coefficient of .4285 was computed between grade five students' recreational reading attitude and reading comprehension. The relationship was significant at the .01 level which indicates that there is a relationship between these grade five students' recreational reading attitude and their achievement in

reading comprehension.

Hypothesis 14: The relationship between grade five students' academic reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.

When raw scores obtained for academic reading attitude and for reading comprehension were correlated, a correlational coefficient of .1476 was obtained. This correlation was not significant and indicates that for this group of grade five students, no relationship exists between their academic reading attitude and their reading comprehension.

Hypothesis 15: The relationship between grade five students' full-scale reading attitude and reading comprehension will be zero.

A correlational coefficient of .3226 was obtained between measures of full-scale reading attitude and reading comprehension. This correlation was significant at the .05 level, and therefore, indicates that there is a relationship between these grade five students' full-scale reading attitude and their reading comprehension.

For hypotheses 13 through 15 dealing with grade five students' attitudes to reading and their reading comprehension, significant correlations were found between recreational and full-scale reading attitude and comprehension, thus leading to a rejection of hypotheses 13 and 15. No relationship was found between academic reading attitude and reading comprehension, leading to an acceptance of hypothesis 14.

An overall correlational matrix depicting the correlational coefficients and levels of significance between the three self-concepts (self-concept of peer relations, self-concept of parent relations, and reading self-concept), the three reading attitudes (recreational, academic and full-scale), and reading comprehension is reported in Table 4. The table provides an overview of all the significant and non-significant relationships computed using the Pearson Product-Moment Method of correlation.

Table 4

CORRELATIONAL MATRIX - ALL VARIABLES

	PER	PAR	RSCON	RECAT	ACAT	FULLAT	COMP
PER	—	—	.1322 .0046	.1775	.0925	-.0772	
PAR	—	—	.0907 .0906	.3978**	.2535	-.1800	
RSCON	.1322	.0907	—	.6547*	.4870*	.6240*	.4868*
RECAT	.0046	.0906	.6547*	—	—	—	.4285**
ACAT	.1775	.3978**	.4870*	—	—	—	.1476
FULLAT	.0925	.2535	.6240*	—	—	—	.3226***
COMP	-.0772	-.1800	.4868*	.4285**	.1476	.3226***	—

Note.

PER	=	Self-Concept of Peer Relations
PAR	=	Self-Concept of Parent Relations
RSCON	=	Reading Self-Concept
RECAT	=	Recreational Reading Attitude
ACAT	=	Academic Reading Attitude
FULLAT	=	Full-Scale Reading Attitude
COMP	=	Reading Comprehension

* = $p < .001$ ** = $p < .01$ *** = $p < .05$

Gender

Gender and Self-Concept

To determine whether gender has an influence on these grade five students' self-concept ratings, T tests were performed. Gender was considered the independent variable and peer relations, parent relations and reading self-concepts were treated as dependent variables. On the next page the hypotheses pertaining to gender are restated and the data obtained are discussed.

Hypothesis 16: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in their self-concept of peer relations.

When the T test was used to test for significance between males' and females' self-concept of peer relations, the mean, as reported in Table 5, was slightly higher for the males (males, 30.7600, females, 29.4242) but this slight mean difference was not significant with a probability of .468. This means that hypothesis 16 is accepted and that the gender of a group of grade five students has no significant influence on their self-concept of peer relations.

Table 5

<u>T-test: Gender and Peer Relations' Self-Concept</u>				
	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Males	25	30.7600	7.468	1.494
Females	33	29.4242	6.418	1.117
<u>Mean difference = 1.3358</u>				
Variances	t- value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Significance	Standard Error of Difference
Equal	.73	56	.468	1.826

Hypothesis 17: There will be no difference between males and females in their self-concept of parent relations.

Again, the T test was used to test for significance between males' and females' self-concept of parent relations. The mean for the males was 35.3200 while the mean for the females was 34.0000 (Table 6). The mean was slightly higher for the boys but was not significant with a probability of .379. This indicates that hypothesis 17 is accepted and that gender has no significant influence on the self-concept of parent relations in this group of grade five students.

Table 6

<u>T-test: Gender and Parent Relations' Self-Concept</u>				
	<u>Number of Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error of Mean</u>
Males	25	35.3200	5.907	1.181
Females	33	34.0000	5.379	.936
<u>Mean difference = 1.3200</u>				
<u>Variances</u>	<u>t- value</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>2-Tailed Significance</u>	<u>Standard Error of Difference</u>
Equal	.89	56	.379	1.488

Hypothesis 18: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in reading self-concept.

The T test was also used to test for significance between grade five males' and females' reading self-concepts. Means of 31.2000 for males and 32.8485 for females were computed (Table 7). The difference was higher for the females but was not statistically significant with a probability of .362. This indicates that hypothesis 18 is accepted. Gender in a group of grade five students will have no significant influence on their reading self-concepts.

Table 7

T-test: Gender and Reading Self-Concept				
	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Males	25	31.2000	7.314	1.463
Females	33	32.8485	6.315	1.099
Mean difference = -1.6485				
Variances	t- value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Significance	Standard Error of Difference
Equal	-.92	56	.362	1.793

Gender and Attitudes to Reading

Hypothesis 19: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in recreational reading attitude.

To test for significance between males' and females' recreational reading attitude, the T test was used. As reported in Table 8, the mean for females was 32.7576 and the mean for males was 30.0800. The mean difference was higher for the females, but was not statistically significant with a probability of .071. This indicates the acceptance of hypothesis 19. Gender has no significant influence on these grade five students' recreational reading attitude.

Table 8

T-test: Gender and Recreational Reading Attitude				
	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Males	25	30.0800	5.507	1.101
Females	33	32.7576	5.472	.952
Mean difference = -2.6776				
Variances	t- value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Significance	Standard Error of Difference
Equal	-1.84	56	.071	1.455

Hypothesis 20: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in academic reading attitude.

When the T test was used to test for significance between males' and females' academic reading attitude, the males' mean was 28.8000 while the females' mean was 29.6364 (Table 9). The mean difference was slightly higher for females but was not statistically significant with a probability of .526. Hypothesis 20 is accepted. Gender has no significant influence on grade five students' academic reading attitude.

Table 9

T-test: Gender and Academic Reading Attitude				
	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Males	25	28.8000	4.690	.938
Females	33	29.6364	5.116	.891
Mean difference = -.8364				
Variances	t- value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Significance	Standard Error of Difference
Equal	-.64	56	.526	1.309

Hypothesis 21: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in full-scale reading attitude.

The T test was also used to determine the significance between the mean scores that were obtained on the males' and females' full-scale reading attitude test. The mean for the males was 58.8800 while the mean for the females was 62.3939 (Table 10). The mean for attitude is higher in favour of the girls, while the mean difference is not significant with a probability of .174. Hypothesis 21 is accepted. There is no difference in males' and females' full-scale reading attitude in this group of grade five students.

Table 10

<u>T-test: Gender and Full-Scale Reading Attitude</u>				
	<u>Number of Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error of Mean</u>
Males	25	58.8800	9.593	1.919
Females	33	62.3939	9.666	1.683
<u>Mean difference = -3.5139</u>				
Variances	<u>t- value</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>2-Tailed Significance</u>	<u>Standard Error of Difference</u>
Equal	-1.38	56	.174	2.555

Gender and Reading Comprehension

Hypothesis 22: There will be no difference between grade five males and females in reading comprehension.

To test for significance between males' and females' reading comprehension scores, the T test was performed. The mean for the males was 26.5000 while the mean for the females was 29.7143 (Table 11). While the mean for the females was higher, this mean difference was not significant with a probability of .248, and therefore, hypothesis 22 is accepted. The gender of this group of grade five students has no significant influence on reading comprehension.

Table 11

<u>T- test: Gender and Reading Comprehension</u>				
	<u>Number of Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error of Mean</u>
Males	24	26.5000	10.583	2.160
Females	28	29.7143	9.253	1.749
<u>Mean difference = -3.2143</u>				
Variances	<u>t- value</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>2-Tailed Significance</u>	<u>Standard Error of Difference</u>
Equal	-1.17	50	.248	2.750

Summary of Findings

Regular correlational analysis and T tests were performed in order to analyze the data collected in this study and to decide whether to accept or reject the stated hypotheses. A number of statistically significant relationships were found. These will be listed firstly. Following, those relationships which could not be supported statistically will be given. As well, a summary of the gender findings follow.

For this group of grade five students statistically significant relationships were found between:

1. students' self-concept of parent relations and academic reading attitude (hypothesis 5).
2. students' reading self-concept and recreational reading attitude (hypothesis 7).
3. students' reading self-concept and academic reading attitude (hypothesis 8).
4. students' reading self-concept and full-scale reading attitude (hypothesis 9).
5. students' reading self-concept and reading comprehension (hypothesis 12).
6. students' recreational reading attitude and reading comprehension (hypothesis 13).
7. students' full-scale reading attitude and reading comprehension (hypothesis 15).

For this group of grade five students, the following relationships were not significant:

1. students' self-concept of peer relations and recreational reading attitude (hypothesis 1).
2. students' self-concept of peer relations and academic reading attitude (hypothesis 2).
3. students' self-concept of peer relations and full-scale reading attitude (hypothesis 3).
4. students' self-concept of parent relations and recreational reading attitude (hypothesis 4).
5. students' self-concept of parent relations and full-scale reading attitude (hypothesis 6).
6. students' self-concept of peer relations and reading comprehension (hypothesis 10).
7. students' self-concept of parent relations and reading comprehension (hypothesis 11).
8. students' academic reading attitude and reading comprehension (hypothesis 14).

There were no differences between:

1. grade five males and females in their self-concept of peer relations (hypothesis 16).
2. grade five males and females in their self-concept of parent relations (hypothesis 17).
3. grade five males and females in their reading self-concept (hypothesis 18).
4. grade five males and females in their recreational reading attitude (hypothesis 19).
5. grade five males and females in their academic reading attitude (hypothesis 20).
6. grade five males and females in their full-scale reading attitude (hypothesis 21).
7. grade five males and females in their reading comprehension (hypothesis 22).

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

In this chapter the study will be summarized and conclusions arising from the findings will be discussed. Secondly, educational implications will be presented based on the results of the study. Thirdly, recommendations for further research will be addressed.

Summary and Conclusions

This study developed from a review of the literature regarding the interrelationships among students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, reader self, reading attitude, gender, and reading comprehension.

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the interrelationships among the various aspects of self-concept, gender, reading attitude, and reading comprehension in a group of grade five students in the City of St. John's. The particular self-concepts included students' self-concept of peer relations, self-concept of parent relations, and reading self-concept. The specific questions addressed were:

1. Are various self-concept scores and reading attitude scores related to reading comprehension in grade five students?
2. Is there a relationship between various self-concepts and reading attitude in grade five students?
3. Are there differences between grade five males and grade five females in reading attitude, self-concepts, and reading comprehension?

The study was conducted with 58 grade five students, 25 boys and 33 girls, of varying reading ability in a three-stream elementary school in the City of St. John's. The students were administered three tests over a two-day period to measure reading attitude, reading comprehension and self-concept. The tests used were the Self-Description Questionnaire-1 (SDQ-1) to measure self-concept, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) to determine reading attitudes and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test to measure reading comprehension. The testing procedures yielded three self-concept scores, three reading attitude scores and one reading comprehension score. Regular correlational analyses were performed to examine intercorrelations among the three self-concept scores, the three reading attitude scores, and the one reading comprehension score. Regular T tests were performed to determine the influence of gender on self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension. A number of significant relationships were found.

Self-Concepts and Reading Attitudes

Self-Concept of Peer Relations and Reading Attitudes

When the self-concept of peer relations' scores were correlated with the reading attitude scores, no significant relationships were found. These results were also found by Brown (1992) in a study conducted with grade two students in a highly similar urban setting. This finding supports the finding of Smith (1971) who stated that even though children may enjoy good peer relations, their attitudes with regard to educational endeavour more closely pattern after their parents.

Self-Concept of Parent Relations and Reading Attitudes

In correlating students' self-concepts of parent relations' scores with their reading attitudes scores, a significant positive relationship was found between students' self-concepts of parent relations and academic reading attitudes, but not between their self-concepts of parent relations and recreational reading attitude or their full-scale reading attitude. This would indicate that children who had good relationships with their parents, exhibited favourable attitudes toward academic reading. Coopersmith (1967), Yamamoto (1972), Felker (1974), Samuels (1977), Swayze (1980), Silvernail (1985), and Amato and Ochilree (1986) all strongly emphasized the importance of a positive home environment and its effect upon the development of positive self-concepts in children. Because this present study found

a significant relationship between reading self-concept and reading attitudes, one could logically conclude that a positive home environment could also result in positive attitudes toward reading.

Amato and Ochilree (1986) reported that a home environment that was conducive to the development of competence was one in which a child's mastery attempts are encouraged, children are given responsive and realistic feedback, and their emotional environment is one of warmth and support. They also noted that such a home environment had parents that talked frequently with their child, had a close supportive relationship with their child, had high educational expectations and aspirations for their child and assisted the child with homework. Again, such a warm, supportive home environment could result in children having positive reading attitudes.

If children have good parental relationships, then there should be less conflict in the home and children would be less likely to rebel against assigned homework times. Children would very likely follow the rules and do all the assigned academic activities. It would be very probable that these children would have more positive attitudes toward academic reading.

Brown (1992) in her study of second-grade readers in a highly similar urban setting, found a relationship not only between self-concept of parent relations and academic reading attitude, but between self-concept of parent relations and recreational reading attitude and full-scale reading attitude. A plausible explanation

for these differences between studies in highly similar settings is that as students mature, parents may spend less time sharing books with their children and involving themselves in their recreational reading as was done in the primary grades. By the time children reach grade 5, the focus of parents may be upon academic reading (i.e., reading informational texts, helping children study for tests).

The significant relationship found between self-concept of parent relations and academic reading attitude points out the need for positive, supportive home environments and strong parent/child relationships as they have a strong influence on self-concept development and academic reading attitude.

Reading Self-Concept and Reading Attitudes

Significant positive correlations were also found between students' reading self-concept and three reading attitude measures. These findings are corroborated in the research literature. Zimmerman and Allebrand (1965) in studying 82 good and 71 poor readers from fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms found a positive relationship between self-concept and reading attitude. The poor readers had poor self-concepts, poor attitudes to reading, and held feelings of discouragement and hopelessness. The good readers were better adjusted and were more internally motivated displaying more effort and persistence when striving to succeed. Claylor (1979) found similar results in his study of 154 boys and 130 girls from regular fifth-grade classrooms. Claylor demonstrated a positive relationship between attitude to reading and self-concept.

Students who had poor attitudes to reading also had low self-concepts and difficulty with reading. Quandt (1972) also reported a positive correlation between low reading attitude and low self-concept with the correlation becoming stronger as the children aged. Additionally, Brown (1992) in her study of 60 second-grade urban Newfoundland children concluded that there was a strong relationship between students' reading self-concept and reading attitude.

In this present study a strong relationship was found between grade five students' reading self-concept and their reading attitudes. This finding indicates that for both parents and teachers it is extremely important that they encourage the development of positive reading self-concepts and reading attitudes in their children. Children need to feel positive about themselves as readers and both teachers and parents as significant others play a crucial role in the enhancement of children's reading self-concepts and reading attitudes. Positive expectations by parents and teachers also have an important influence on children's success in reading.

Children who feel competent and like reading are likely to engage in reading more and consequently, become more skilled at reading. According to Stanovich (1980), time spent on reading is generally considered to contribute to increases in reading comprehension. This phenomenon is known in the reading literature as the "Matthew Effect" or a "rich get richer" phenomenon. Those children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies, will read more and learn more word meanings. Hence, they will read even better.

Self-Concepts and Reading Comprehension

Self-Concept of Peer Relations and Reading Comprehension

No significant relationship was found between grade five students' self-concept of peer relations and their reading comprehension. This indicates that peer relations had no influence upon these grade five students' reading comprehension. Similarly, Brown (1992) in her study of 60 grade two urban Newfoundland students, reported the same findings. On the other hand, Henderson and Long (1971) in studying 95 black lower-class children in grade 1 found that the nonreaders were socially withdrawn while the readers had a more mature independence. Henderson and Long's sample, however, was different from the sample of grade five students in the present study in that the present study did not have any nonreaders. Also, Teigland (1966) in a study of fifth-grade students found that achievers were better adjusted and had better peer relations than underachievers. Thus, no overall conclusions can be drawn from this present study since the findings from various settings with diverse learners differ.

Self-Concept of Parent Relations and Reading Comprehension

No significant relationship was found between grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their reading comprehension. Brown (1992) also reported the same findings in her study of urban Newfoundland children.

Reading Self-Concept and Reading Comprehension

A significant, positive relationship was found between reading self-concept and reading comprehension in this group of grade five students. Those students who were better comprehenders had more positive reading self-concepts. This significant, positive relationship would confirm the findings of Wattenberg and Clifford (1964), Caplin (1969), Thomas and Hartley (1980), Vereen (1980), Markland and Hanse (1984), and Corroero and Turner (1985) who found a significant relationship between an overall or comprehensive concept of the self and academic achievement. The findings from this present study also confirm the findings of researchers who found a significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic/reading achievement (Brookover, Patterson, and Thomas, 1962; Brookover, LePere, Hamachek, Thomas and Erickson, 1965; Brookover, Erickson, and Joiner, 1967; Singh, 1972; Marx and Winne, 1980; Marsh, Parker, and Smith, 1983; and Marsh, Smith, Barnes, and Butler, 1983). Relatively few studies were available in the research literature between the specific variables of reading self-concept and reading achievement. The findings of this present study confirmed the findings of those researchers who considered specifically reading self-concept (Jason and Dubnow, 1973; Brown, 1992; Byrne, 1993; and Legge, 1994). And according to Mursh and Shavelson (1985), Internal/External Frame of Reference Model, there is a strong, positive direct relationship between reading self-concept and reading achievement.

The results of this present study emphasize the role of reading self-concept in the reading achievement of elementary students. These data provide further support for parents and teachers to create positive supportive environments both at home and in school to promote children's self-concepts as readers. We must ensure that our children feel positive about themselves as readers by providing them with positive experiences in successful reading situations and having strong expectations for their success in reading. In such an environment children will feel confident in risk-taking as they read and will feel comfortable if making mistakes. If parents and teachers expect children to become readers and treat them as such, then, it is more likely that they will become readers.

Reading Attitudes and Reading Comprehension

Significant positive relationships were found between both the recreational and full-scale reading attitudes and reading comprehension but not between academic reading attitude and reading comprehension. This indicates that students who have positive recreational reading attitudes are better comprehenders. In this study, academic reading attitude is unrelated to reading comprehension.

Many of the studies in the research literature considered reading attitude as a general attitude and did not consider the specific components of recreational and academic reading separately. The findings in this present study, with the exception of

academic reading attitude, lend confirmation to many of the studies in the research literature that have produced positive correlations between students' attitudes toward reading and their reading achievement (Cramer, 1975; Kennedy and Halinski, 1975; Alexander and Filler, 1976; Crews, 1978; Hall, 1978; Bobel, 1981; Goostree, 1981; Fredericks, 1982; Wigfield and Asher, 1984; Walberg and Tsai, 1985; and Byrne 1993).

No significant relationship was found between academic reading attitude and reading comprehension. For the 58 children who participated in this study, 64% of them had a lower score on the academic reading attitude than on the recreational reading attitude. A plausible explanation for this lower score for 64% of the children is that academic reading does not involve the same pleasure as does recreational reading which has as its main purpose reading for pleasure. The types of activities involved in academic reading were asked as questions on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, the test that was used in this study to measure reading attitudes. The questions asked included the following:

1. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?
2. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?
3. How do you feel about reading in school?
4. How do you feel about reading your school books?
5. How do you feel about learning from a book?

6. How do you feel when its time for reading class?
7. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?
8. How do you feel when you read aloud in class?
9. How do you feel about using a dictionary?
10. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

Swanson (1982) found that young children have relatively positive attitudes toward reading in the beginning stages of learning to read, but that it is only when learning to read becomes a task that negative reading attitudes began to develop. These grade five students may be finding academic reading experiences to be more task-oriented and less pleasurable involving practice and performance while recreational reading experiences tend to be more pleasurable.

Parental involvement in early childhood may be another factor influencing these grade five students' academic reading. In the early childhood years, these children may not have had enough academic reading experiences to develop a strong academic attitude. These parents may not have expected their children to answer questions about books, or to retell stories when they were read to by parents or other significant others. They may not have had frequent exposure to informational books and may have had more recreational reading experiences. In fact, their first academic reading experience may have begun in school.

It is interesting to note that Brown (1992) and Legge (1994) in their studies of grade two students in similar urban settings reported that there was no significant

relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement. The absence of a relationship may be explained by the age of the children in their studies. It is possible that these children may have had a positive attitude toward reading regardless of their ability to comprehend materials read. As Rains (1993) reported, fifth- and sixth-grade children had a significantly lower positive attitude toward academic and total reading than children in grades 1 through 4.

In conclusion, the grade five students in this study who have positive recreational reading attitudes are better comprehenders of materials read and those who display more negative reading attitudes have more difficulty in comprehending materials read. The academic reading attitudes of these students have no influence on their reading comprehension. However, their overall or full-scale reading attitude does influence their reading comprehension because there is a significant, positive relationship between their full-scale reading attitude and their reading comprehension.

Gender

Gender was found to have no significant influence on these grade five students' self-concept of peer relations, self-concept of parent relations, reading self-concept, the three measures of reading attitude (recreational, academic and full-scale) and reading comprehension.

Gender and Self-Concepts

The fact that gender was not shown to significantly influence the particular self-concepts studied (peer relations, parent relations and reading) is encouraging. This finding indicates that boys perceive themselves just as positively as girls in all three of the self-concept areas studied.

This contradicts the findings of several Australian studies that have shown that boys have higher self-concepts than girls, although the gender differences may depend upon the component of self-concept, the age, the self-concept instrument being used, as well as cultural differences in socialization of reading (Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers, 1975; Smith, 1975; 1978; as cited by Marsh, Barnes, Cairns, and Tidman, 1984). The findings of the present study does, however, strengthen Battle's (1985) research findings, where no significant differences in the various aspects of self-concept (general, social, school, home) could be found. But Battle did find that gains were made by boys as they matured. In addition, Brown (1992) in her study of grade two students in a highly similar urban Newfoundland setting found no differences between boys and girls with regard to self-concepts of peer and parent relations. Further studies of peer/parent relations' self-concept and gender differences are warranted.

The fact that there are no differences in these grade five boys' and girls' reading self-concepts is a positive finding. This finding indicates that boys perceive their reading ability just as positively as girls do. This finding contradicts the finding

of Marsh, Smith and Barnes (1985) who in studying 559 fifth-grade Australian students, concluded that girls had a higher level of reading self-concept than did boys. In addition, Brown (1992) in her study of second-grade urban Newfoundland students reported similar results with girls having a higher level of reading self-concept than boys. Also, Wallbrown, Levine and Elgin (1981) reported that boys perceive themselves as having more problems with reading than girls. Byrne (1993), however, in her study of sixth-grade rural Newfoundland children confirms the finding of the present study that there were no differences in reading self-concept between boys and girls. Legge (1994) in her study of grade two students in urban Newfoundland found similar results. More research on the gender/reading self-concept issue is required at various grade levels.

Gender and Reading Attitudes

No significant differences were found between boys and girls with regard to their recreational, academic and full-scale reading attitude. This findings contradicts the findings of researchers who reported that females have generally been more interested in reading than males and have a more positive attitude toward reading than males (Johnson, 1964; Askov and Fischbach, 1973; Kennedy and Halinski, 1975; Arlin, 1976; Crews, 1978; Goostree, 1981; Wallbrown, Levine, and Engin, 1981; Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert, 1985; Dwyer and Reed, 1989; Ross and Fletcher, 1989; Suhorsky, 1989; Smith, 1990; Richards, 1991; and Brown, 1992).

The finding of this study that there are no differences between boys and girls with regard to reading attitude, however, corroborated the findings of other researchers (Hammons, Knafle, and Pascarella, 1981; Byrne, 1993; and Legge, 1994). Legge and Byrne both found no differences between boys and girls reading attitudes in grades 2 and 6 from urban and rural settings in Newfoundland respectively. Hammonds, Knafle and Pascarella also reported that the sex of 320 students from inner city and suburban schools had no effect on reading attitude.

Davis (1978) reported mixed findings. One of Davis' major conclusions was that some research studies reported that girls had more positive attitudes toward reading, some studies reported that boys had more positive attitudes, and some reported no difference in negative/positive attitude and the gender of the participant.

In a grade two study conducted by Brown (1992) in a setting highly similar to the present study, boys had less positive reading self-concepts and reading attitudes than girls. The present study of grade five students discovered no differences between boys and girls in both their reading self-concepts and their attitudes toward reading. What factors could contribute to these differences?

One plausible explanation is that these grade five students may have had teachers and parents whose expectations for both boys and girls were the same. Both boys and girls may have received equal attention from the teachers and the teachers may have expected the boys to perceive reading as positively as girls. These teachers may not have made different assumptions with regard to boys' and girls' attitudes.

Consequently, the gender of the students did not influence attitudes toward students.

Mazurkiewicz's (1960) study investigated socio-cultural influences on the reading attitudes of children. Mazurkiewicz discovered that boys as well as their fathers thought that reading was a feminine activity. This may not have been the case in the present study. Fathers and male significant others may have been role models for these grade five boys by providing reading related activities and thus contributing to boys' self-concept of themselves as readers. These fathers may be equally involved with mothers in doing school-related activities, for example, assisting with the homework or attending parent-teacher interviews. In some homes with mothers absent, fathers may have been entirely responsible for providing academic experiences.

Gender and Reading Comprehension

In this grade five sample of 58 students from an urban setting no significant differences were found between males and females in reading comprehension. This contradicts the findings of many researchers who reported girls to be superior in the areas of reading and language (Gates, 1961; Johnson, 1972; Maccoby, 1976; Finn, Dulberg, and Reis, 1979; Walberg and Tsai, 1985; Cloer, 1991; Ostling, 1992; and Rains, 1993).

This finding differs from the results of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, 1993, which was administered to grade four students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In this large sample testing, females exceeded males on the reading

subtest. The grade four male students in this province were at the 39th percentile and the grade four female students were at the 46th percentile. Additionally, the number of male students receiving special education (programs in language arts and math) far exceeded the number of females. On the other hand, Brown (1992) who studied grade two students in an urban setting, Byrne (1993) who studied grade six students in a rural setting, and Legge (1994) who studied grade two students in an urban setting all reported no significant differences between males and females in reading comprehension in these specific classrooms in Newfoundland schools. Owing to the mixed findings in this area of gender and reading comprehension, more research is warranted in Newfoundland schools at various grade levels.

This finding contradicts the research of Finn, Dulberg and Reis (1979) who reported that in North America where most elementary teachers are female, modelling of female teachers has been suggested as the reason for female superiority in reading. For this group of grade five students who have always had female teachers throughout their school years, boys succeeded equally well as girls.

Educational Implications

Students' attitudes toward reading and self-concepts have been strongly emphasized throughout the research literature as being important facets of the reading process. The research literature has reported significant relationships among the

various self-concepts, reading attitudes and comprehension. Specifically, the present study has confirmed significant relationships among self-concept of parent relations, reading self-concept, attitudes toward reading, and reading comprehension. These significant relationships form the basis for specific educational implications. The educational implications of this study include the following:

1. The significant relationship found between these grade five students' self-concept of parent relations and their academic reading attitude demonstrates the importance of a positive, supportive home environment where there are good parent and child relationships, necessary to children's development of positive attitudes for reading. A nurturing home is essential to prepare children for school. Parenting programs including affective education programs offered by schools are necessary to provide parents with more effective interpersonal communication skills. These programs also help parents become aware of the types of home interactions that are necessary to encourage positive reading attitudes and contribute to developing positive reading self-concepts.
2. The confirmation of significant relationships between these grade five students' reading self-concept and their reading attitudes, including both recreational and academic, and between reading self-concept and comprehension, highlights the need for educators and parents to promote the development of children's positive self-concept as readers and reading attitudes as necessary components contributing to children's overall enjoyment and achievement in reading.

As children enter school, their self-concepts are still in the process of developing in their interpersonal encounters with significant others (i.e., parents, teachers, grandparents). When children begin school the teacher becomes a significant other. How teachers view students and react toward them becomes an important factor in how they view themselves. Children need to receive positive messages from significant others regarding their reading ability. These significant others must also have positive expectations of the achievement of their children. Expectations that a child can and will learn help to promote self-confidence in the child and lead to engagement in reading activities.

How children perceive themselves as readers strongly influences their reading comprehension. Thus, it is essential that both teachers and parents provide learning environments for children in which their self-concepts as readers will flourish; that is, there should be opportunities for children to be seen in a positive and productive light. Children need to receive praise for their reading accomplishments and be encouraged to take risks and chances at reading as they work toward becoming skilled readers.

Teachers and parents should encourage students with a low reading self-concept to modify the way they think about their performance. They need to minimize failure and emphasize success. Students need to view mistakes as a natural part of learning a new skill.

Students should be encouraged to express their own thoughts freely and teachers need to be sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of students. Students feel good when their ideas are considered worthwhile.

3. Teachers need to be continuous observers of their students' behaviours. Teachers and school counsellors must understand the behaviours related to a low reading self-concept, and be able to recognize the symptoms exhibited by children who have low reading self-concepts. Conferences with parents and students, and tests of self-concepts can be used to gain more information about children.

Once teachers are aware of children's reading self-concept, experiences should be provided which provide a challenge for them but which will also maximize their opportunities for success. Through experiencing success, children will develop confidence to try new tasks. Learning tasks should be tailored to meet the needs of each child in order that they work within their capabilities and to build upon their strengths. The teacher should use a variety of grouping patterns in the classroom and these patterns should be changed frequently so that children do not establish low expectations from the labelling of such groups. Any remediation programs that are designed must include the improvement of students' reading self-concepts as one of their major objectives.

The development of a positive reading self-concept is so important that the whole school, not just some individual teachers should be involved. A school-wide program directed at improving students' reading self-concepts would be a very

positive beginning.

4. The significant, positive relationship found between grade five students' reading attitudes and reading comprehension has implications for teachers. An emphasis on the development and maintenance of reading attitudes at all grade levels should be an important focus in all schools. Teachers need to be informed of methods that assess students' reading attitudes and measurement of their reading attitudes should be a part of the reading assessment program at all grade levels.

Children who like to read will engage in reading more often, thereby increasing their skill in comprehension. Also, since recreational reading attitude is related to comprehension, schools need to include reading for recreational purposes as an essential component of their reading program.

The content of the reading curriculum in some schools may need to be adjusted in order to instill a positive attitude in the students toward reading. The reading program in a classroom should contain a strong element of children's literature with books from different genres and have varied ability and interest levels. Teachers need to look at ways of implementing positive motivational techniques into the curriculum in order to promote more positive attitudes toward reading. Such techniques as paired reading, author studies and book talks may provide for part of the reading program.

5. Teachers need to display a positive enthusiasm and an optimistic attitude toward reading. Teachers need to be seen as readers; thus serving as a model for

students. Each day the teacher should schedule time for both teacher reading and silent reading.

6. No significant differences were found between boys and girls in their self-concept of peer relations, their self-concept of parent relations, their reading self-concept, their reading attitudes and reading comprehension. This finding implies that, for at least these grade five level students, boys' self-concept of peer relations, their self-concept of parent relations, reading self-concept, reading attitudes, and reading comprehension are comparable with that of the girls. The research literature has mixed findings with regard to gender and its effect upon these variables. As well, gender is related to socialization practices varying culturally. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the present finding will be the same in all classes. Therefore, it is important that parents and teachers be aware of the expectations that they hold for boys and girls ensuring that there are no biases. Both boys and girls must be made to feel competent in reading and provided with the kind of support that will make reading a very rewarding and successful experience.

In summary, providing a supportive family environment, promoting positive reading self-concepts, helping children feel positive and confident, creating environments that foster the development of positive reading attitudes, informing teachers of methods of assessing self-concepts and reading attitudes, encouraging recreational reading, and having the same expectations for boys as well as girls provide for a reading environment that will contribute to the development of life-time readers.

Recommendations for Further Research

As any investigation proceeds, questions and other related issues that need to be addressed become apparent. The following recommendations for further research stem from this study.

1. This study, which was conducted only with grade five students in an urban setting, should be conducted at varying grade levels in both urban and rural Newfoundland to test the generalizability of the findings.
2. To extend the theoretical model of relationships among the variables, the question of directionality between the variables should be examined. For example, appropriate statistical procedures could be used to determine if reading comprehension could affect reading self-concept or whether reading self-concept could affect reading comprehension. Similarly, the directionality of other significant relationships found in this study could be determined.
3. The role that gender plays developmentally and culturally in reading needs to be investigated more thoroughly. In the present study no differences were found between males and females in the particular self-concepts (self-concept of peer relations, self-concept of parent relations and reading self-concept), reading attitudes (recreational, academic, and full-scale) and reading comprehension. As discussed

previously, the research literature indicated mixed findings in the field.

4. Research needs to be conducted to investigate the specific influence of the home environment, parental attitudes and expectations upon the reading self-concepts and reading attitudes of their children.
5. In investigating the relationships among self-concept, reading attitudes and reading comprehension, the specific variable, reading self-concept, rather than the commonly found variable, global self-concept, should be used in future studies. Few studies to date have been conducted using the specific, reading self-concept.
6. Research needs to be conducted to determine effective ways to promote positive reading attitudes and positive reading self-concept development during the elementary school years.
7. Research needs to be conducted to examine the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward reading and students' attitudes toward reading.
8. The impact of parental attitudes toward reading on children's reading self-concept, reading attitudes and reading comprehension needs to be investigated.
9. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted to track the development of reading attitudes, self-concept, and reading in children to determine variations in attitudes toward reading among individual children or specific groups of children as they progress throughout the grades.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

14 Waterloo Crescent
Mount Pearl, Newfoundland
A1N 3X2

February 12, 1995

Dr. Walter C. Okshevsky
Chair
Ethics Review Committee

Dear Dr. Okshevsky:

In order to complete thesis requirements for a Master's Degree in Education, I wish to investigate the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitude and comprehension. Three tests/surveys will be administered in a group setting to three classes of grade five students.

The Self-Description Questionnaire-1 will be given to determine self-concept ratings (copy included). This test (Marsh 1990) designed for use in grades two and up, measures self-concepts in four nonacademic areas (Physical Ability, Physical Appearance, Peer Relations and Parent Relations), three academic areas (Reading, Mathematics and General School), as well as General Self. Total Nonacademic Self-Concept, Total Academic Self-Concept and Total Self-Concept ratings can also be calculated. This test can be administered within fifteen to twenty minutes.

The second test, designed to determine attitudes to reading of students in grades one through six, is the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (copy included). This test consists of twenty items which can be administered within ten to fifteen minutes. Each item presents a briefly-worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of Garfield with expressions illustrating a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative. The child must circle the one that best matches his/her own feelings.

The third test, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Level D 5/6 (copy included), will be given to determine each student's reading achievement. Only the comprehension section of this test will be given. The test contains fourteen passages of various lengths, with a total of forty-eight questions about these passages. Some of the questions require constructing an understanding based on information that is explicitly stated in the passage; others require constructing an understanding based on information that is only implicit in the passage. Practice items to be done with the

students are provided. The students work through the test at their own speed until a time limit of thirty-five minutes has passed.

Presently, I am on educational leave. However, I am employed as a grade five teacher at Cowan Heights Elementary in St. John's where I plan to collect my data.

Sincerely,

Rosalie A. Whiteway

Appendix B

14 Waterloo Crescent
Mount Pearl, Newfoundland
A1N 3X2

February 26, 1995

Mr. Fred Rowe
Assistant Superintendent
Avalon Consolidated School Board
P. O. Box 1980
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 5R5

Dear Mr. Rowe:

I am a grade five teacher at Cowan Heights Elementary School and I am presently on educational leave. I am working towards the completion of a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Memorial University of Newfoundland with my supervisor, Dr. Joan Oldford-Matchim. In order to complete this degree, I must conduct a study. My study will investigate the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitude and comprehension. This study has received approval from the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee at Memorial University.

In order to establish any correlations among these variables, it will be necessary to administer some tests and questionnaires to a group of grade five students. The test/questionnaires include the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Self-Description Questionnaire-1, and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. I have enclosed a copy of the parental/guardian consent form for your perusal. If you have any concerns regarding this matter, please contact me at 368-9165. If you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with this study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development. Except for these tests/questionnaires which will take approximately one and one half to two hours in each stream of grade five, the regular classroom program will not be interrupted in any way.

I hereby request your permission to test the students in the three grade five classes at Cowan Heights Elementary. For your convenience, at the end of this letter is a consent form which you can forward to me if you approve of this study. I look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

Rosalie Whiteway

I _____ (Assistant Superintendent of the Avalon Consolidated School Board) hereby give permission for Rosalie Whiteway to conduct a study to investigate the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitude and comprehension with the three grade five classes at Cowan Heights Elementary. I understand that all information is strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix C

14 Waterloo Crescent
Mount Pearl, Newfoundland
A1N 3X2

February 26, 1995

Mr. Roy Chaytor
Principal
Cowan Heights Elementary School
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Chaytor:

In order to complete the requirements for the Master's Degree programme in Curriculum and Instruction at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I wish to conduct a study with a group of grade five students during March, 1995. The study is designed to investigate the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitude and comprehension. The supervisor of my study at Memorial University is Dr. Joan Oldford-Matchim. This study has received approval from the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee. If you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development.

The study can be conducted over a two-day period for approximately one hour each day in each stream of grade five. However, if this is conflicting with classroom schedules, then the study can be spread over a longer period of time. Written permission from the parents/guardians will be required before any child can participate in the study. I have enclosed a copy of the parental/guardian consent form for your perusal.

I hereby request your permission to allow me to conduct this study at Cowan Heights Elementary School. At the bottom of this letter is a consent form which you can forward to me if you approve of this study. I look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience.

I thank you for considering my request.

Yours truly,

Rosalie Whiteway

I _____ (Principal of Cowan Heights Elementary) hereby give permission for Rosalie Whiteway to conduct a study to investigate the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitude and comprehension with the three grade five classes at Cowan Heights Elementary. I understand that all information is strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified.

Date: _____ Signature _____

Appendix D

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. I am presently working on a Master's Degree in reading with my supervisor, Dr. Joan Oldford-Matchim. I would like to administer some questionnaires and a reading comprehension test to your child to gain some information on the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitudes and reading comprehension.

Your child's participation will consist of two sessions of me reading sentences to him or her and asking them to choose a response which best suits the way he or she feels. For one session your child will be given a reading comprehension test. Your child will be required to read a series of passages and then answer questions on these passages by selecting one answer from a choice of four answers for each question. The testing will be done over a two day period for approximately one hour each day.

All information gained in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. Participation is voluntary and you or your child may withdraw at anytime. This study has received approval from the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee, the principal of the school and the school board. The results of my research will be made available to you upon request.

If you are in agreement with having your child participate in this study, please sign below and return one copy to the classroom teacher. The other is for you. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at 368-9165. If at any time you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with this study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development.

I would appreciate it if you would please return this sheet to me by March 14, 1995.

Yours sincerely,

Rosalie Whiteway

I _____ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child to take part in a study regarding the interrelationships among fifth-grade students' concepts of parental relationships, peer relationships, concept of self as reader, gender, reading attitudes and reading comprehension undertaken by Rosalie Whiteway. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that my child and/or I can withdraw permission at anytime. All information is strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified.

Date

Parent's/Guardian's Signature



